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# English as a Medium of Instruction in the Territory of New Guinea ; a Critical Analysis of the Literature

Werner Joseph Shadeg  
*Loyola University Chicago*

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ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN THE  
TERRITORY OF NEW GUINEA: A CRITICAL  
ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

by

Werner Joseph Shadeg

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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## LIFE

Werner Joseph Shadeg was born in Union Hill, Minnesota, on July 12, 1919.

After his graduation from St. Paul's High School, Epworth, Iowa, he continued his studies at Sacred Heart College, Girard, Pennsylvania. He graduated there in June, 1938, and then entered the Novitiate of the Society of the Divine Word at Techny, Illinois.

While at St. Mary's Major Seminary he completed a three-year philosophical and a four-year theological course. He was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Reverend William O'Brien, D.D., of Chicago, on August 15, 1945.

From 1946 till June of 1947 he was temporarily assigned to Techny, where he taught Latin. He volunteered to go to New Guinea as a Divine Word Missionary and embarked in November of 1947. During his ten years in New Guinea he learned Neo-Melanesian, taught school, was the educational liaison officer of the Vicariate of Wewak, did secretarial work for Bishop Leo Arkfeld, and over week-ends went on bush-treks to do pastoral work. His Ecclesiastical and Religious Superiors wished that during his sabbatical leave from New Guinea he would study at a University. Consequently, he began his graduate studies at Loyola University in Chicago in February of 1958.

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## CHAPTER I

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Present Study

In July, 1953, various persons in New Guinea intimated that it would take years for the United Nations Trusteeship Council to gloss over the inglorious stigma it unwittingly incurred through its pronouncements endorsing the eradication of Pidgin English, alias Melanesian Pidgin or Neo-Melanesian, in the Territory of New Guinea. All four official members of a United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in the South Pacific had unequivocally said this about New Guinea:

The Mission is strongly of the opinion that Pidgin is not only not suitable as a medium of instruction, but has characteristics derived from the circumstances in which it was invented which reflect now outmoded concepts of the relationship between indigenous inhabitants and immigrant groups. Therefore, it believes that the most energetic steps should be taken to eradicate this jargon from all instruction given within the Territory, and that plans be urgently developed to eliminate it from the Territory completely.<sup>1</sup>

This statement was grist for the mill for those fond of dubbing Neo-Melanesian a barbarous gibberish, a bastard language, a mongrel jargon, a vulgar hodgepodge of English and German and Malay with a few native Pacific Island languages thrown in for good measure, a linguistic monstrosity, a

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<sup>1</sup> Report on New Guinea: 1953, No. 4 (United Nations Trusteeship Council, New York, 1953), p. 25.

grotesque and half articulate baby-talk. On the other hand, others, having taken umbrage at the snide references which this episode occasioned, restrainedly voiced their reaction in adages like "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," or "Where ignorance is bliss, it's foolish to be wise." Local or Australian newspapers, especially The Sydney Morning Herald, quoted a number of journalists and writers who had been affected by apparently newly-spawned prejudices which generated more emotion than sound logic. Thus, one writer objected to Pidgin because it had no literature and could never hope to get any; another decried Pidgin's limitations for worthwhile and higher education; another concocted parodies that are unsurpassed as travesties of real Neo-Melanesian; another felt he could not tolerate the unabashed vulgarity inherent in all Pidgin; another commented that as a corruption of English, Pidgin would serve as an obstacle in the effective learning of standard English; another referred to Pidgin as an accursed wedge ensuring unjust separation between the indigenous and non-indigenous population of New Guinea; another maintained it could not be a language, since it lacked grammar; another insisted Pidgin had a deleterious effect on natives by retarding their mental development; and still another felt that Australia's honor had been besmirched by the United Nations' condemnation of Pidgin.<sup>2</sup> How Australia was implicated and became the target of criticism nobody will ever understand unless he looks a little into the history of New Guinea.

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<sup>2</sup> These reasons against Pidgin are from Robert A. Hall, Jr., Hands Off Pidgin (Sydney, 1954), pp. 103, 44, 15, 99, 48, 43, 108, 105, 20, 46 and 45.

Although sighted by the Portuguese Jorge de Meneses in 1526 and again by the English Captain Cook in 1770, New Guinea with its two and one-half million fierce-looking, chocolate-skinned inhabitants, did not lure any white settlers to its reefed shores until 1828. At that time the Dutch entered the western portion of this second largest island in the world and named it Dutch New Guinea. Almost sixty years later the Germans moved into the northeastern section, as well as into the adjacent islands of New Britain, New Ireland, New Hanover, Manus, and the North Solomons. After 1914 this land was no longer called Kaiser Wilhelms Land, but the Territory of New Guinea. The English arrived in 1888. But they had to be content with the unclaimed southeastern corner of the mainland, Papua. While these three areas of 309,275 square miles constitute three political divisions, they are known for the most part to the outside world under the general name of New Guinea. With mountains ranging up to 15,415 feet, and with many fast-flowing and bridgeless rivers dissecting the malaria-infested lowlands, this rugged country has few roads--a factor which through the centuries has tended to keep the thatch-roofed natives isolated. The Europeans (that is the usual designation for the whites) were acutely conscious how this, together with the multiplicity of tongues, would cause considerable difficulty of communication. And the Stone-age culture of the aborigines would add to the complexity of this situation. Since his advent the European felt that for a smooth blending of cultures there would be a particular need for a common language. Nevertheless, he judged it impractical, indeed impossible, for himself to learn the three hundred and fifty or more languages spoken by

the people.<sup>3</sup> For the native, too, this seemed equally senseless. Some approached the problem by choosing one native language for a larger area and standardizing it. With its similar vocabulary, concepts, and structure, would it not be simpler for the native to learn than English? Unfortunately, it would lack a ready-made and extensive literature, and it would not be a universally used language. But the reason weighing most heavily against it, was the bitter animosity which the respective clans themselves envisioned as inevitable should their own language be regarded as less worthy of selection than that of some other natives. However, a lingua franca was a prerequisite for the indigenous and non-indigenous if the primitives, standing on almost the lowest rung of the ladder of civilization, were to be lifted up by the immigrant whites. Australia's relation to this matter remained somewhat remote until 1906, the year in which the British government formally committed Papua to the care of the Commonwealth of Australia. And when in 1914 her responsibility was extended to the 900,315 neolithic Melanesians living in the 93,000 square miles constituting the Territory of New Guinea, Australia was confronted with a challenge of nearly cosmic proportions: She had to come to grips with the problem of race relations

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<sup>3</sup>There is a discrepancy among the authors in their estimates of the number of different languages. Mr. Dietz refers to "about 400 languages" in his Media of Instruction in Papua and New Guinea (Port Moresby, 1955), p. 1; Professor Hall mentions "hundreds of languages" in his Hands Off Pidgin (Sydney, 1955), p. 17; and in the Foreward of Hall's Book, R. W. Robson (having in mind not only the Territory of New Guinea but also Papua) speaks of "more than 700 separate languages." Ibid., p. 5. The writer believes that the wording in these quotations is such that the estimates can easily be reconciled. One thing is certain--all agree on no less than 300 different languages.

between two variously polyglot peoples at very different but converging standards of living. In consequence of the impact of the cannons shot in Europe but felt in faraway New Guinea, Germany was forced to surrender her Kaiser Wilhelms Land to Australia. Renamed as the Territory of New Guinea, this tract of ground was eventually placed under the aegis of the Australian Government in an official way, first by virtue of a resolution of the League of Nations in 1921, and next by virtue of a United Nations Trusteeship Agreement in 1946. Thus, Australia and the United Nations assumed a mutual responsibility in guaranteeing everyone in New Guinea the right to educational facilities and so it was incumbent upon both to concern themselves with the basic need, a common language for formal schooling, as well as for communicating with natives and non-natives. It is true, long before the United Nations came into being the early white settlers, planters, traders, and labor-recruiters had introduced Neo-Melanesian. Assuming that the natives' jerky efforts at imitating the language of the European evidenced a mental inferiority, these whites sometimes resorted to the kind of baby-talk which mothers can so spontaneously create while adapting themselves to their children's level. To the native, unfamiliar with the real language, this was the pattern worthy of copying. Even though the loan-words were often garbled and incoherently simplified, they were further modified by the pronunciation, grammatical forms, extensions of meaning, and syntax proper to the natives' mother tongue. This process of pidginisation took place especially between 1847 and 1903, for during that time many South Pacific Island laborers were indentured by Australia's Queensland sugar plantations. And since they associated particularly with rough sailors, whalers, and unrefined traders

whose social status was held in low esteem, the sequel was of course not at all surprising--there would be unjustified slurs against Pidgin by language-purists for its apparently inelegant or coarse terms describing down-to-earth realities, be they scatological or erotic or otherwise. In fact, Sir Hubert Murray happened to nurse such an antipathy for this new tongue that he (as the first Governor of Papua) barred it from Papua; the German Imperial Government ranted against it, recommending that it be rooted out in all German-occupied areas of New Guinea lest Germany's prestige acquired as a wise colonial power, would fall lamentably low. It seems ironical that in spite of these strictures, Neo-Melanesian became more deeply entrenched at the German capital of Rabaul, and not only did not stop but even spread while absorbing both German and Rabaul native-language words. Today, therefore, it persists as a language in its own right, and not as a mere corruption of standard English; it serves as the one and only lingua franca between the native and non-native, as well as between the native and his fellow-natives. Nevertheless, in compliance with a ukase of the United Nations Trusteeship Council which was issued in 1963, Australia as the administering authority of the Territory of New Guinea, felt constrained to rule out this unifying present-day language among the Melanesians and to supplant it with standard English, fully aware of course that no mere fiat could possibly suffice to abolish Pidgin. Mr. Hasluck, the Australian Minister for Territories had this in mind when he declared: "It would be just as foolish to suggest that all Europeans should speak nothing but Russian next week. Pidgin has been used by generations as the only common talk between people divided by scores of

languages. We are working towards replacing it, but it takes much more than passing resolutions to change people's habits."<sup>4</sup>

### B. The Purpose of the Present Study

The motivation, in general, for delving into this study arose out of the experience of the writer who from 1947 to 1958 was engaged in educational endeavors in the primitive country of New Guinea. Specifically, the need was there for a greater degree of clarity on the medium of instruction in the primary grades. Any one of the following was a possible alternative vehicle of classroom-communication: (1) One native language for the whole Territory of New Guinea; (2) a number of vernaculars representative of the largest language-groups, but replaced by English for all higher education; (3) English, to the exclusion of Neo-Melanesian and every native tongue; (4) Neo-Melanesian for the first few years of the instructional program, followed by English for the later elementary grades; (5) Neo-Melanesian only. Adverse and favorable comments were widely voiced on the specific and intrinsic merits of these five categories. In effect, they (like the recommendation of the United Nations to abolish all Pidgin) caused confusion and even floundering indecision in constructing sound curricula for New Guinea schools. Reflecting diametrically opposed persuasions, they have intrigued the writer, who in consequence deemed it worthwhile to examine in the light of selected educational and linguistic principles, the validity of the divergent views of the qualified researchers in order to ascertain the relative efficiency of these media, particularly of Neo-Melanesian compared to English. Similar

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<sup>4</sup>Hall, p. 102.

investigations have been instanced in Africa, the Philippines, Texas, and elsewhere; but having treated merely parallel rather than identical situations, they are only partially pertinent. In 1955 Doctor Robert Hall, Professor of Linguistics at Cornell University, in his Hands Off Pidgin, analyzed the case with regard to Neo-Melanesian from a linguist's standpoint. And for the benefit of vacillating educationists, his book pointed out the most useful and justifiable avenues of approach to the language-problem in New Guinea schools. There are two complements to Hall's study, both published as Reports by the Department of Education of Papua and New Guinea in 1954 and 1955. They are entitled (1) The Problem of Language: No. 1--Pidgin; and (2) The Problem of Language: Paper No. 2--Media of Instruction in Papua and New Guinea. Written by the Education Officer, Thomas A. Dietz, a specialist in the practical phases of languages and their relation to literacy, these two papers added weight to Hall's linguistically-slanted work by injecting data from experience in the field, as well as citations reflecting the mind of those considered to be authorities in this sphere. These are limited aspects of the language-situation. It is the objective of the writer to collate and undertake an analysis of the general aspects of these and like specialized analytic studies with a view to eventual synthesis.

#### C. Limitations of the Study

Geographically the present study prescinds both from the western portion of the mainland of New Guinea known as Dutch New Guinea, and from Papua, the southeastern sector; it confines itself to the country which is of mutual interest to Australia and the United Nations, viz., the Territory of New Guinea. Encompassing the entire northeastern part of the mainland of New



Guinea and the islands of New Britain, New Ireland, New Hanover, Manus, and the North Solomon Islands, it supports a population of nearly a million polyglot Melanesians.

In its scope this paper must be narrowed both as to extension and comprehension. It will extend to a critical examination of the conflicting convictions of authors who are concerned about the vehicle of transmitting knowledge to the lower primary grades, though it will not expressly exclude the upper grades. Particular attention will be paid to whether that medium of instruction is English or Neo-Melanesian instead of a native tongue, since for the multilingual Melanesians the official language is officially English, but unofficially and de facto English and Neo-Melanesian. Furthermore, to avoid ambiguity let it be borne in mind that the following terms will be limited to these determinate meanings throughout this paper: (1) official language: the language used in the legislative, executive, and judicial business of the government; (2) mother tongue: the language a person was most proficient in as a child; (3) lingua franca: a language which is spoken habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them; (4) second language: the language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue; (5) vernacular language: the mother tongue of a group that is politically and socially subject to another group talking a different language; (6) pidgin (identified in this paper with Neo-Melanesian): a language which has arisen as the result of contact between peoples of different language, usually formed from a mixing of the

languages; (7) world language: a language used over wide areas of the world.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, to ensure representativeness of current opinion on the New Guinea language-problem, the only authors of divergent views who will be selected will be those successfully qualifying on the basis of one of these criteria: Either they were close to the situation and thus could gain first-hand information, or they were specially competent in their respective realms of activity, or they wielded through their works enormous influence on the actual present operation of the schools in New Guinea, or they made significant contributions within the last ten years. Their tenets, moreover, will be appraised according to their consonance with some widely accepted educational and linguistic principles.

In its comprehension this paper will seek broadness rather than exhaustiveness. Hence, even though not neglecting to advert to, for instance, the linguistic, economic, socio-cultural, political, educational, and practical aspects of an advocated medium of instruction, this study does not purport to be a specialized discussion of the various viewpoints. On the contrary, it will have the nature of a brief overview.

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<sup>5</sup> Except for the second definition, these fixed meanings correspond with the ones listed in "The Report of the Unesco Meetings of Specialists, 1951." Though some of them are not given verbatim, the writer got them from Unesco, Monographs on Fundamental Education: The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education (Unesco, Paris, 1953), p. 46. Regarding a mother tongue, often described as the language of one's cultural environment, the writer wishes to assert that it is not necessarily the language which one's mother actually spoke, nor need it signify the first language one learned to speak.

#### D. The Procedure

It would be insane to start to scout around for material without previously delineating, isolating, and delimiting a specific problem. Since the choice of the optimum medium of instruction in New Guinea elementary schools is a moot question to which educational circles of Australia, New Guinea, and the United Nations contribute conflicting views, the writer would like to bring all pros and cons related to adopting one particular language in preference to another, into clearer focus. The crux of the situation in this instance devolves, first of all, about evaluating the feasibility of proscribing Neo-Melanesian among the multilingual Melanesians, and secondly about advising its supplantation with standard English. There is such a mish-mash of fact and fancy enveloping these two proposals that all honest efforts at consolidating the case are doomed to become abortive unless they are directed toward (1) erasing the vestiges of prejudice, (2) filtering out from the maze of emotional and unreasoned propositions those which are dispassionate and objective, (3) surmounting the flimsy attacks or specious arguments of dissenters, (4) whittling down the postulates favoring the discarding of Neo-Melanesian and those militating against it, and (5) utilizing a theoretical construct whereby the intrinsic worth of researchers' views can be gauged.

It will be the task of the writer to gather his data by (1) making library investigations, (2) consulting with teachers and school officials of New Guinea, (3) conferring with research personnel in linguistics, and (4) taking recourse to actual experience in the field. This collecting will extend to gleaning facts even from parallel situations among Africans,

Filipinos, and Mexicans or Indians in America. Though such material will be less germane, nevertheless it can have contributory evidence whose value is assessable.

A framework within which gathered experience-data and researchers' views are compared with certain selected educational and linguistic criteria, constitutes the writer's approach to appraising the efficiency and validity of individual informational items. Whenever any information is compatible with the aforementioned universally accepted educational and linguistic principles, its efficiency and validity for aiding the solution of the language-problem are enhanced. Conversely, whenever it is incompatible with the same norms, its worth is diminished. Since the present study is characterized by such meshing of data with acknowledged standards, it becomes tantamount to a critical analysis of the literature. Beyond doubt, a more profound understanding of the forces which converge to form clues for the ultimate answer to the knotty-language-question is gained as the study shuttles back and forth over the boundaries of linguistics and education, particularly when it examines the essential side issues concerned with (1) what constitutes a language, (2) what expedites the teaching and learning of a foreign language, (3) what elements (from the standpoint of syntax, semantics, phonemics, morphology or vocabulary) make Neo-Melanesian either a stepping-stone or a hindrance to the learning of English.

Indeed, an investigation of this nature sheds some light on which medium of instruction is the best for New Guinea's schools. Nevertheless, it does not lay pretense to being decisive in settling that case. But even if it does not pose as the final word in the matter, it does give greater

justification to certain inferences and policy-suggestions. These are recorded.

The last feature in the procedure of this study is none other than a concise resume, enabling the reader to weigh for himself what is conclusive or inconclusive evidence for preferring one given language to another in the classrooms of New Guinea.

### E. Related Literature

To comb American libraries, book-stores, and publishing-firms for Neo-Melanesian literature, specifically for an individual phase of it, namely, the merits of Neo-Melanesian in comparison to English as a means of communication between New Guinea teachers and pupils, is not a fascinating job. Besides being scant, such literature is hard to get. There are, it is true, unpublished treatises and published books and monographs. But they remain almost inaccessible to a person in America precisely because they are written almost without exception in a foreign country.

For the related literature the writer separated for review three broad groups of studies: First, those that are synthetic in nature and directly connected with Neo-Melanesian; secondly, those that are analytic in nature and directly connected with Neo-Melanesian; and, thirdly, those that are analytic but only indirectly connected with Neo-Melanesian. The first group, not ex professo bothering about the components of language, amasses empirical data and quotations of authorities regarding the use of vernaculars. Most representative of such studies are those published by the Department of Education of Papua and New Guinea. Written as Reports by Mr. Thomas Dietz, these are an ad hoc approach to answering the provocative question about

Neo-Melanesian as a respectable and useful medium of instruction at the outset of school-life and English at the fourth grade and later levels. Their merit stems from the fact that apart from being composed in the field, they enjoy the endorsement of the Department of Education in Papua and New Guinea. Appearing in 1964, Dietz' first brochure was known under the title of The Problem of Language: Paper No. 1--Pidgin. His second treatise came in 1955 and was called The Problems of Language: Paper No. 2--Media of Instruction in Papua and New Guinea. Homologous to these works are under Unesco publications, mainly excerpts from The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education (Unesco, Paris, 1953) and Reports on New Guinea (Trusteeship Council, New York, 1953, 1956).

Since the first group of studies leaves an analysis of the Neo-Melanesian language almost untouched, the writer is forced to resort to supplementary writings. Largely analytical in character and directly engaged with scrutinizing what constitutes Pidgin, they include chiefly the following: Robert Hall's book Hands Off Pidgin (Technipress House, 29 Alberta Street, Sydney, 1955), Current Affairs Bulletin (XIV, No. 12, Sydney University, September 27, 1954), and Francis Mihalic's Grammar and Dictionary of Neo-Melanesian (Techny, Illinois, 1957). Very commendable in the latter is the phonemic orthography of Neo-Melanesian which was recently enshrined as the only officially authorized spelling for all New Guinea. This reduces the intricacies of the language. A worthwhile factor to the ultimate workability of a medium of communication is its simplicity. If that is granted as a premise, then it follows that Mihalic's book in facilitating Neo-Melanesian spelling, indicates Neo-Melanesian rather than English which is fraught with

inherent difficulties, as the logical vehicle of instruction for New Guineans. Less illuminating than Mihalic's grammar and dictionary is Sydney University's fortnightly Current Affairs Bulletin (XIV, No. 12, September 27, 1954). This edition affords a cursory treatment of Pidgin English. But from the vantage point of a linguist, Dr. Robert Hall's book is unsurpassed. Considering Neo-Melanesian's syntactical, semantic, and morphological aspects, it establishes Neo-Melanesian as a true language, dislodges some bias that heretofore stigmatized it, and shows that though it is simple in structure and therefore easy to learn it is adequate for expressing any and every idea, no matter how abstract or abstruse. The present study incorporates a number of his findings.

In addition to this literature, the writer canvassed a third group of studies, analytic in nature but only indirectly tied up with Neo-Melanesian. As offering either contributory material taken from almost parallel situations, or as expounding in a scientific way the elements of languages and the techniques for assimilating them more easily, this array of writings includes such milestones as Dr. P. A. Cook's African Languages and English in Education (London, 1949), W. C. Grove's Native Education and Culture-Contact in New Guinea (Melbourne, 1936), Eugene Nida's Learning a Foreign Language (Second ed., New York, 1950), Charles A. Fries' Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language (Ann Arbor, 1945), and Harold Jowitt's Principles of Education for African Teachers (London, 1932). To a large extent these studies form the nucleus around which the evaluation-mechanism for the present study was devised.

### F. Value of the Study

It is of significant interest to New Guinea school authorities to know whether it is wise or unwise to eradicate Pidgin, to replace it with English. They may wonder whether Neo-Melanesian is as bizarre, as inelegant, as inadequate as its opponents insinuate. Possibly they regard as imponderables such matters as (1) the relative efficiency of English in lieu of Pidgin as a vehicle of transmitting thought, (2) the possibility of Neo-Melanesian serving as a bridge to standard English, (3) the degree of discrimination that is believed to be extant between indigenous and non-indigenous people as long as Pidgin is spoken between them. It is the conviction of the writer that while the present study distills the various views of the elite, certain crystallization of some of their propositions takes place and this, in turn, makes for elucidation in the matters alluded to above. Besides being an analysis of the general aspects of some specialized analytic and synthetic studies, this paper may be an aid in achieving an eventual synthesis of the whole language-problem of New Guinea. Even though apodictic inferences may not be envisaged for all areas of concern, nonetheless a degree of clarification is forthcoming, usually enough to point out a policy or program as at least rational, justifiable, and useful, even if in some cases it is actually not the best. Thus, as indicating courses of action that seem best, this research is such that it can (1) advise on the most effective expenditure of funds, (2) advise on the most effective use of time of teachers and pupils, (3) facilitate communication, (4) accelerate the acculturation process among the natives, and (5) suggest whether the present Syllabus for Native Schools:



Part II--Revised (Port Moresby, Papua, 1955) merits retention or warrants rejection for promulgating the following:

In Village Schools the medium of instruction is the Vernacular. . . . The teaching of English in these two years (scil., Class 1 and Class 2) will be limited to the understanding and use of simple oral statements, questions, commands, greetings, and requests. In the second two years of the Village School, known as Standard I and Standard II, pupils will commence the systematic study of English, the vernacular being the medium of instruction in general subjects. In schools where pupils are drawn from more than one linguistic area, it may be convenient to employ Melanesian Pidgin, which for school purposes is regarded as the equivalent of a vernacular language.

. . . . .  
Village Higher Schools, which normally receive pupils who have completed Standard II in Village Schools, include Standards III, IV, V and VI. Pupils in these schools continue the study of English, which is progressively used as the medium of instruction. By the completion of Standard VI, pupils are expected to be fluent in English.<sup>6</sup>

Bearing in mind that the United Nations Trusteeship Council issued a proclamation in 1953 which outlawed Neo-Melanesian, the reader is doubtlessly suspecting that in making the above-mentioned arrangement of Pidgin in the early grades of school, the Department of Education of Papua and New Guinea is flouting the United Nations' order. Of course, they would be wrong even though it is true that the revised Syllabus was published in 1955. There is a clear benefit emerging from a careful perusal of this study, i.e., the reader can understand why Australia and the Department of Education could not well act otherwise.

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<sup>6</sup> Syllabus for Native Schools, Part II, Revised ed. (Port Moresby, Papua, 1955), p. 1. The same Syllabus specifies that for the so-called Station Schools the pupils start on English from the beginning; they have no vernacular classes.

## CHAPTER II

### PERTINENT EDUCATIONAL AND LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLES

When an investigator broaches the conflicting evidence on the choice of a suitable medium for New Guinea schools he soon sees he has to do some screening and separating of defensible from indefensible ideas. This realization naturally has him resort to an array of cardinal educational and linguistic principles. These, whether pedagogical or psychological in nature, often coalesce so that their line of demarcation is extremely difficult to detect. In reality, however, this lack of discrimination is entirely immaterial to their application to the literature under examination. What does matter in this study is that their selection is stringently based on their specific relevancy to the observations of the various authors cited.

Probably there are no principles in sound teaching or in learning which are more illustrious than these stereotyped maxims of the method: Proceed from the known to the unknown, from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to the abstract, from the particular to the general, from the whole to the part. As truisms these underscore the fact that past mental history actually causes the mind to interpret new ideas in the light of meanings already acquired, and that therefore a person does well to root and relate his new teaching or learning to familiar equipment. Furthermore, they suggest that logically simple units or wholes come before their complex or constituent

parts. Hence, a child at the outset of school, while knowing a whole word since it is a natural thought-unit, may see no meaning at all in its individual component letters. Likewise, the eye as an undifferentiated whole can be perceived easily; its parts, on the contrary, are not so readily discerned. For the same reason, geography lessons start with a general survey of an area and only at a later stage move on to a detailed study of the same region.<sup>1</sup> The gist of these principles has been succinctly stated by Otto Jespersen: "The material for instruction must be arranged in stages from very easy to more and more difficult things."<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of the foregoing and, indeed, closely akin to them, there loom two particularly prerequisite principles which use the known to pass to the unknown, namely, speak the learner's familiar language, his mother tongue, and found all lessons on the previous experience and life-situations of the student. How these influence language teaching and learning is a matter of great moment to those responsible for upholding and implementing Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by which "everyone has the right to education."<sup>3</sup> Hence, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education voices the following norms:

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<sup>1</sup>James Elijah, M.A., M.Ed., and John Cole, B.A., M.Ed., The Principles and Technique of Teaching in Elementary Schools, New and revised ed. (Melbourne, Australia, No date), pp. 9-15.

<sup>2</sup>Otto Jespersen, How To Teach a Foreign Language (London, 1917), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Charles D. Amoun, Special Rapporteur and Permanent Representative of Lebanon to Unesco, Study of Discrimination in Education (Unesco, New York, August, 1957), p. 1.

(1) It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue;<sup>4</sup>

(2) (M)any pupils . . . can learn to read provided the reading materials are simple and based on interesting, familiar experiences, and the methods used are adapted to the specific needs of the learners.<sup>5</sup>

Both of these embody educational and linguistic facets which require a little explication. As to the first, experts of the United Nations explained

(C)hildren should have their first schooling in the language they spoke at home, for there could be no doubt that they would learn most easily, quickly and effectively through this medium. On the other hand to insist on this everywhere would be perfectionism.

(T)he commission, while recognizing the force of such arguments in very many countries of the region, did not wish to emphasize exceptions to the rule. . . .

Instruction in the primary school should invariably be in the mother tongue, unless special circumstances, such as a very small number of children in the locality or the existence of a very large number of undeveloped dialects in a region, make it impossible.<sup>6</sup>

Another Unesco publication regarded the mother tongue as a medium most invaluable for these reasons:

Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to

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<sup>4</sup> Unesco, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, alias Monographs on Fundamental Education (Paris, 1953), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> Unesco, Compulsory Education in South Asia and the Pacific (Drukkerij Meijer Wormerveer, Holland, 1952), pp. 111-112; and p. 132. This book is also entitled Studies on Compulsory Education. It was prepared for Unesco as a Report of the Bombay Conference, December 1952. There is no need at this stage to indicate the alternative course of action when for certain circumstances the mother tongue is superseded by another language.

which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium.<sup>7</sup>

With remarkable perspicuity Dr. C. E. Beeby comments in a similar vein:

A foreign language is for a child not just a different set of words for the same things, but a new and strange way of looking at things, an unfamiliar grouping of ideas, a different world in which familiar landmarks are lost or obscured.<sup>8</sup>

Going one step further and adding just when vernacular should be employed,

Harold Jowitt wrote for African teachers:

That the language of instruction must be the child's language, at all events, for the first few years is educationally sound; it is also inevitable. The past largely conditions the future in the educational process, and in that process the general ideas of the pupil, obtained through the medium of the mother tongue, are of vital importance.

.....  
Hence it can be reasonably contended that throughout the course, from the first year of the infant school to the last year of the teacher-training school, the vernacular should be respected and given due recognition. . . . Whenever you are in doubt it is well to be guided by the ease of conveying a meaning. If this can be more easily conveyed in the vernacular, then the vernacular should be used.<sup>9</sup>

Another principle stressed by the experts of Unesco is slightly different but very useful for this study. It is expressed thus: "If a child's mother tongue is not the official language of his country, or is not a world language, he needs to learn a second language."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Unesco, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education (Unesco, Paris, 1953), p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>C. E. Beeby, Report to the New Zealand Government on Education in Western Samoa (Wellington, 1954), p. 29.

<sup>9</sup>Harold Jowitt, Principles of Education for African Teachers (Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., London, 1932), p. 153.

<sup>10</sup>Unesco, Report of the Use of Vernacular Languages (Paris, 1951), p. 46.

It has been noted previously that one phase of the going from the known to the unknown involves gearing lessons to the previous experience and life-situations of the student. In reference to this, the El Paso (Texas) Public Schools offer this empirical information:

Meaningful concepts are essential to the teaching of language. Words are merely labels to name concepts. Meaning is developed by the use of concrete objects and first-hand experiences, followed by repetition or drill. Pictures may be used at this level after the child has had first-hand experience with the things the pictures represent.<sup>11</sup>

Professor F. J. Schonell is quoted in support of this: "Recent psychological studies of reading have tended to emphasize the paramount value of meaningful material in both the preliminary and the instructional stages of learning to read. Words must mean ideas, not merely mechanical patterns."<sup>12</sup> This may be why years before, Jespersen advised: "Sentences must be heard in real life." "The beginner has only use for the most everyday words. . . ."<sup>13</sup> From what has been said, it is no surprise that Jowitt should recommend to his African teachers "to have English readers specially designed for the locality in which they are used."<sup>14</sup> While discussing the reader's background of experience as a influencing progress in reading, William Gray points out how the pupil's

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<sup>11</sup> El Paso (Texas) Public Schools, Manual of Aids and Devices for Teaching Beginning Non-English Speaking Children (El Paso, 1946), pp. 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Dietz, The Problem of Language: Paper No. 2--Media of Instruction in Papua and New Guinea (Port Moresby, 1964), p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Otto Jespersen, How to Teach a Foreign Language (London, 1917), p. 16; p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Jowitt, pp. 188-189.

interest will wane and his understanding of the reader will vanish unless the experience and life-situations of the pupil are taken into account in every class. Here are his words:

The content of readers, like that of primers, should relate to things, events and activities that are of vital interest. . . . Such items differ to some extent in different language and cultural areas of the world. Among the interests that seem to be more or less universal are family and neighborhood life, the rearing and education of children, the making of a living, community problems, the duties of a good citizen, the history of one's country or race, humorous stories, fables, folklore, proverbs, and the wise sayings of sages.

Ability to understand what is read depends in large measure on the associations aroused. These in turn depend on previous experiences. If the associations are pertinent and vivid, the reader will understand more or less fully what is read; but if few associations are evoked, he will obtain little or no meaning from what he reads. The reader's ability to grasp related and implied meanings, his capacity to make critical evaluations, and his ability to use what he reads are all bounded by his previous experience.<sup>15</sup>

Teachers are to foster understanding by adverting to or providing for experience, which in turn assists the clearness of the images and hence the memory. Failure in understanding begets bad memory.<sup>16</sup> However, lack of retentiveness of memory and lack of interest are not the only effects that can at times be ascribed to the disregard of the principle that "subject-matter must not be beyond the pupil's horizon" both in language and in previous experience background.<sup>17</sup> Professor Fred Schonell diagnosed discouragement in a student as the outcome of teaching beyond the pupil's ken. There are many children

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<sup>15</sup> William S. Gray, The Teaching of Reading and Writing (Unesco, Paris and Switzerland, 1956), p. 263; pp. 73-74.

<sup>16</sup> Jowitt, p. 105; p. 107.

<sup>17</sup> Jespersen, p. 27.

coming to school, though at first eager to learn to read, lose their initial enthusiasm through early failure and discouragement "because insufficient care is devoted to creating the correct type and amount of preparatory background for learning to read."<sup>18</sup> The Australian Council for Educational Research corroborates this when it says "With young children it is all-important that they should succeed in reading."<sup>19</sup> If anywhere then certainly here it is true that "nothing succeeds like success." It has been discovered the hard way that "too early an introduction to difficult material may have a deleterious influence upon the formation of the normal perceptive span in reading."<sup>20</sup> "Sound policy dictates that . . . all programmes, whether new or revised, must be adapted to the needs of the areas served."<sup>21</sup>

Very closely allied with eschewing material outside the pupil's mental range, is the principle which advocates reading-readiness. "There is evidence of need for preparing for reading." "Practically every recent book on teaching reading emphasizes the same."<sup>22</sup> With regard to the level of maturity

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<sup>18</sup> Fred Schonell, The Psychology and Teaching of Reading, Second ed. (London, 1951), p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Australian Council for Educational Research, The Approach to Reading: Primary Studies No. 1 (Fitzroy, Victoria), p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Fred Schonell, Backwardness in the Basic Subjects (London, 1948), p. 124. The same quotation is cited by Dietz (p. 12) in his brochure, The Problem of Language: Paper No. 2--Media of Instruction in Papua and New Guinea (Port Moresby, 1955).

<sup>21</sup> Gray, p. 119.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 123. Here are some books supporting Gray's observation: Sarah Gudshinsky's Handbook of Literacy (Norman, Oklahoma, 1953); Fred Schonell's The Psychology and Teaching of Reading (London, 1946); Reading



required for reading-readiness only the following factors fall within the scope of this paper: (1) Sufficient auditory discrimination to distinguish various sounds; (2) Some ability of speech, such as possessing a speaking vocabulary of the early lessons, or capability of reporting what is seen or heard in the vicinity of the school premises, or an intelligent adequacy for orally interpreting pictures of common objects, or sufficient understanding to obey simple directions. Thus, the study, for the most part, prescind (1) from sufficient visual acuity to recognize slight differences in word patterns, (2) from emotional development to aid sustained attention, motor-control, or coordination, and (3) from the "orientation of sense," i.e., the knowledge to recognize that the sight or sound of any word can have a meaningful structure or symbol, i.e., that a word represents meaning.

As a corollary to the principle of teaching interesting and meaningful material within the language and experience limits of the pupil, there is this fundamental law: "A serious effort must be made in schools throughout the region to divest the curriculum of the inert matter which deadens school for child and teacher alike."<sup>23</sup> "Be sure there's use for what is studied so that the pupil is not burdened with an exception of a word, declined differently from the usual paradigm, just for completeness." "Entirely superfluous words make for drudgery."<sup>24</sup> In practice this implies that in teaching and learning

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in the Elementary School by the National Society for the Study of Education (University of Chicago, Chicago, 1949--Forty-eighth Yearbook, Part II).

<sup>23</sup> Unesco, Compulsory Education in South Asia and the Pacific (Drukkerij Meijer Wormerveer, Holland, 1952), p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> Jespersen, p. 21.

a language "disconnected words are but stones for bread; one cannot say anything sensible with mere lists of words. Indeed, not even disconnected sentences ought to be used. . . , violent leaps from one range of ideas to another." "The dread of being unsystematic by taking up exceptions immediately is one of the causes of the prevalence of the disheartening series of detached sentences. . . ." <sup>25</sup> Most enlightening apropos of this is the method found to be most effective by Charles C. Fries, Professor of English and Director of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, and described in this way:

The student must not be confused by a variety of alternative modes of expression. The first consideration, therefore, must be given to a selection of basic patterns to the production and recognition of English in the immediate situations in which the language is being learned.

In such a selection of patterns the needs of a speaker on the production level differ from his needs on a receptive or recognition level. On the productive level he needs but one pattern for any situation.

For the beginner, therefore, the number of structural patterns to be learned should be reduced to the basic minimum. On the productive level the mastery of alternative patterns provides an unnecessary burden that only delays progress toward the practical use of the language. In the choice of patterns to be mastered on this level, range of usefulness and regularity of form constitute the two most important criteria. . . . Productively he needs but one pattern of order for phrases and clauses and not an exploration of the various positions in which particular phrases and clauses can stand.

But for recognition, for understanding the language as used by English speakers, frequency of occurrence is a fundamental criterion of selection.

The treatment of word order constitutes the basis of the framework because English structure is so largely a matter of position and order. <sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Jespersen, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Charles C. Fries, Teaching and Learning English As a Foreign Language (Ann Arbor, 1945), pp. 32-33.

The foregoing quotations lead up to principles pertaining to vocabulary and translations in language-study. "(I)t is quite useless," says Eugene Nida, Professor of Linguistics at the Summer Institute of Linguistics of the University of Oklahoma, "to begin learning a language by memorizing a dictionary, even one with only the common words listed. Languages are learned by words in meaningful combinations." "The new vocabulary is introduced in meaningfully related groupings. . . . This is quite different from many traditional grammars where words are introduced because they happen to belong to the first declension, the second declension, the first conjugation, the second conjugation, etc., rather than because there is some meaningful connection between the words."<sup>27</sup> Pondering this from a semantic standpoint, Dr. Hall writes:

All meaning reflects our experience of the universe we live in. It is commonplace to say that if we have no experience of something, then we do not know what it means--not only linguistically, but also emotionally and in our social adjustment.

. . . . .  
When we go from one language to another, it is immediately obvious that the segmentation of experience differs in the meanings which different languages ascribe to forms. . . . No two languages have exactly the same range of meanings covered by comparable forms.<sup>28</sup>

The studies of Professor Fries coincide with the aforementioned: "Practically never do two words (except possibly highly technical words) in different languages cover precisely the same areas of meaning." Referring to lexical, syntactical, morphological, and "pitch contour" meanings, he continued: "Very few vocabulary entries in a dictionary 'have only one meaning.'" As a matter

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<sup>27</sup> Eugene A. Nida, Learning a Foreign Language, Second Ed. (New York, 1949) p. 25; p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Hall, Jr., Leave Your Language Alone (Linguistics, Ithaca, New York, 1950), pp. 120-121.

of fact, the actual number of clearly separable senses covered by most of the commonly used words in English is enormous." He adds that "in dealing with words it is necessary . . . to keep in mind that the range of situations in which a language uses a particular word is likely to be arbitrarily limited. Any attempt, therefore, to approach the meaning of words in English as a foreign language through a process of tying or relating the new word in English to a word in the native language will hinder and may thwart the effective mastery of the new vocabulary."<sup>29</sup> Speaking of the "anarchy of words"

Frederick Bodmer maintains:

Many of the difficulties of learning a foreign language arise through failure to recognize to what extent and in what circumstances words of one language are strictly equivalent to words in another. Numerals are most reliable; names and physical qualities are also all right; most capricious are particles and conjunctions.<sup>30</sup>

It is because words are colored by the milieu in which they are immersed that their meaning cannot be adequately grasped without a true insight into the culture in which they appear. This was adverted to by Fries, who wrote as follows:

Every language is thus inextricably bound up with the whole life experience of the native users of that language. (The fabric of social life is such that a foreigner) probably can never enter completely into the meanings of a foreign language as they function for the native speaker of that language.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Fries, p. 38; p. 40; p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> Frederick Bodmer, The Loom of Language (New York, 1944), p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> Fries, pp. 57-58.

As sequel to this, Jespersen advises that translation be used sparingly--

"merely a word or, at the very most, a sentence now and then." There is his additional comment:

Some languages distinguish shades of grammar or meaning which are of no consequence in other languages, finesses seem to be extended to totally different habits as to order of words, etc. Taken all in all, this makes it impossible for any translation to be a perfect reproduction of the original. Traduttore traditore!<sup>32</sup>

In conclusion Jowitt remarks significantly for any language to be learned as a foreign language:

It is not sound practice to read an English sentence and then translate it into the vernacular, or to read a vernacular sentence and then translate it into English. . . . This means that in teaching English as little of the vernacular as possible should be permitted. Actions, gestures, the use of objects and pictures, will all help in this direction. . . . In this way purity of language will be maintained and the pupils will not make mistakes through thinking in one language and speaking in another. . . .<sup>33</sup>

Almost unanimous in rejecting the "translation method" of learning a foreign language, the authors steer toward a "listening and speaking method" and thereby supply the pupil with further useful principles. Nida noted that "in listening to someone else speak, we should attempt to think along in the foreign language, without attempting to translate the words into English."<sup>34</sup> It is true, "in the traditional method the student had to translate and got little opportunity to say anything in the foreign language outside of what stood in the book. Thus, the pupil neglected cultivating the foreign

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<sup>32</sup> Jespersen, p. 80.

<sup>33</sup> Jowitt, pp. 188-189.

<sup>34</sup> Nida, p. 26.

language as it is rapidly and naturally spoken by the native."<sup>35</sup> Nida waxes eloquent on this, for these are his words:

One of the most common errors in learning is the failure to practice hearing. We have become so accustomed to the book technique of learning anything that we consider our time most profitably spent studying in the isolation of our libraries. This is folly for the student of foreign languages. He must get out where the language is spoken and where he can speak.

.....  
When we hear words and expressions from a native speaker, we should of course imitate just as closely as possible, so that speaking follows immediately upon listening.<sup>36</sup>

The idea of first hearing and then employing conscious mimicry was highlighted by Nida in this way:

The scientifically valid procedure in language-learning involves listening first, to be followed by speaking. Then comes reading, and finally the writing of the language. This is almost the reverse of the traditional methods. One of the reasons for this is that many teachers of foreign languages cannot themselves speak the language, and hence there is no chance to listen. Certainly the infrequent, clumsy, oral reading of the prescribed sentences in the textbooks can scarcely be called speaking. What actually happens in so many instances is that the student begins by writing out sentences on the basis of grammar rules. . . . We usually end up by hating grammar and detesting the language.<sup>37</sup>

There is no doubt about this same matter in the mind of the linguist, Dr. Robert Hall, who regards the aforesaid as a "basic principle." According to him, the intelligent learner "will want to hear and speak first, and then start to read when he has a firm command of speech on which to base his reading and writing."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jespersen, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Nida, p. 27; p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> Hall, Leave Your Language Alone, p. 211.

When people are engrossed in listening and especially in reproducing what they hear, they cannot help stumbling into the field of phonetics. Here, too, there are important principles calling for attention on the part of the student learning a foreign language. It might be said in the first place that the sounds of each language differ, so that "every sound in every foreign language is a foreign sound and is different from English." "Some of the sounds of two different languages may be similar, but they are never completely identical." "Moreover, in English there are aspirated and unaspirated consonants, but we do not distinguish words by means of this difference, though other languages do; the difficulty which we have as English speakers is in hearing these differences accurately. . . . We tend to hear only those distinctions which we make in our own language."<sup>39</sup> Specifically concerned with another phase of phonology and important in formulating other useful principles, is the plasticity of the child versus a kind of inadaptability of adults. Referring to this Edward Sapir says:

The muscles of our speech organs have early in life become exclusively accustomed to the particular adjustments and systems of adjustment that are required to produce the traditional sounds of the language.<sup>40</sup>

To break the hold of inveterate speech habits is very hard. Experientially Eugene Nida discovered how wrong attitudes in this can stymie even the best language program. "Some people think that the important thing is getting the words and grammar, and then gradually refining the pronunciation. . . .

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<sup>39</sup> Nida, p. 133; p. 123; p. 127.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Sapir, Language (New York, 1921), p. 46.

(T)his is a false idea, for the early habits stick with us and soon become unbreakable."<sup>41</sup> The findings of Professor Fries concur:

(W)hile our ear is delicately responsive to the sounds of speech, the muscles of our speech organs have early in life become exclusively accustomed to the particular traditional sounds of the language.

.....  
Our teachers do much more in less time for those students who, when they come, know no English whatever, than for those who already have some fluency with no accurate control of the sound system or the structure.<sup>42</sup>

Harold Jowitt professes the same belief:

Since childhood is more plastic than later life . . . it is much easier to teach an African child to speak than to teach his father or grandfather. A teacher should also remember that just as it is difficult to form a new habit, so it is difficult to break an old habit.

.....  
If English is to be taught the habits necessary to correct speech are most important, and such habits will be formed much more easily with young children than with adolescents or adults.<sup>43</sup>

However, according to the experts of Unesco, the failure to begin in early life is not an irremediable thing. They state that "a second language if it is not acquired early in childhood, may well be mastered as regards grammar, but as regards pronunciation it is very difficult to re-educate the process of articulation for the production of sounds not existing in the mother tongue. Nevertheless, this is not a major handicap."<sup>44</sup> From what has been said it must not be thought that the pliability which is predicated of youth

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<sup>41</sup> Nida, p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> Fries, p. 25 (Appendix); p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Jowitt, p. 92; p. 94.

<sup>44</sup> Unesco, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 10.



is a useful feature only for phonology. Its value in other areas of education is pointed out by Charles Fries in these words:

The child who is placed in a foreign language environment attains a satisfactory competence in the new language with amazing speed not only because he is linguistically more flexible and without restraint and self-consciousness but also because his language needs are much less than those of an educated adult. His experience and his vocabulary are much limited in his own language and it takes him comparatively little time to gain control of an equivalent vocabulary in the new language. An adult who has already learned a native language (extensive enough to grasp and express a rich and varied experience) can never again be in the same position as a child learning his own language. For an adult the language will probably never function in the same way his native language does.<sup>45</sup>

A further fundamental principle in linguistic theory is that expressed by Dr. Robert Hall: "All languages and dialects are of equal merit, each in its own way." "All languages, as languages, are of equal merit, Pidgin no less than any other." "(N)o language can be said to be inherently superior to any other as a vehicle for thought and communication in its natural surroundings. . . ."<sup>46</sup> There is unanimous endorsement of this by the experts of Unesco and those in Departments of Linguistics: "Experts now agree that there is nothing in the structure of any language which precludes it from becoming a vehicle of modern civilization."<sup>47</sup> Of course, those who fail to understand the monolithic character of a language, may object to a technically underdeveloped language on the grounds that it has no "grammar," or a limited vocabulary, or no written form. But there are other linguistic principles

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<sup>45</sup> Fries, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Hall, Hands Off Pidgin English (Sydney, 1955), p. 105; p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> Announ, p. 109.

which show that these three arguments do not hold water. Concerning the first category, "grammar," Nida voices the following views:

In beginning to study another language we must not think of words in terms of their English or Latin formal equivalents. Each language has a system of its own, and we can learn to speak it best if we recognize this fact.

.....  
We are accustomed to thinking of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections that we assume that all languages have these types of words. Furthermore, we assume that if they have pronouns, they probably have relative, interrogative, adjectival, personal, and demonstrative pronouns. Such assumptions are very wrong indeed.<sup>48</sup>

A similar fact is given by Robert Hall:

We usually think that such familiar categories as number, gender, tense or person must be universal in human speech, and we tend to look down on any language that does not show them. When we look at the evidence, however, we see that these categories are anything but universal. Many languages make no distinction in linguistic form between singular and plural, or between past, present, and future. On the other hand, we may find distinctions that are unknown to us. . . .<sup>49</sup>

The underlying reason for this difference is indicated in Bodmer's Loom of Language. This is the explanation proffered:

Unlike tense, voice, number, and comparison, flexion of person is absolutely useless in many modern European languages. All that remains of it in our own language is the final s of a verb which follows certain words such as he, she, or it, or the names of single things, living beings, groups or qualities, e.g., in such more or less intelligible statements as he bakes, she types, or love conquers all. . . . The final s adds nothing to the meaning of a statement.

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Again and again history has pronounced its judgment upon the merits of such inflexions in culture contacts through trade, conquest, or the migration of peoples. International intercourse compels those who speak

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<sup>48</sup> Nida, p. 177; p. 176.

<sup>49</sup> Hall, Leave Your Language Alone, p. 104.

an inflected language to introduce the words which make the flexions useless.

.....  
 What schools used to teach as English grammar was really an introduction to the idiosyncrasies of Latin. . . . And most educationists in America or England now condemn time wasted in the mental confusion resulting from trying to fit the tricks of our own terse idiom into this foreign mold.<sup>50</sup>

To the conservative traditionally-minded learner such quotations may seem very revolutionary. The fact is that (as Fries points out in his Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language) "an efficient practical approach to the various problems of gaining a real control of the 'words' of English must begin with a recognition of the fact that the vocabulary items are of various kinds, and that those various kinds of items demand separate description and different treatment."<sup>51</sup> Insisting that language learning should not be mere memorisation of disparate items he not only reduces basic forms and arrangement of words to a minimum number of patterns essential to the production and recognition of English in the immediate situations in which the language is being learned, but he also classifies "words" of English into four groups "for the purpose of emphasizing those particular features which are essential for teaching and learning English but often overlooked by textbook writers and teachers, to the confusion of the student."<sup>52</sup> His "function" words comprehend the traditional parts of speech known as pronouns, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, connectives, articles, and adverbs of degree; his "content" words represent the old grammatically designated nouns, principal verbs, adverbs

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<sup>50</sup>Frederick Bodmer, The Loom of Language (New York, 1944), p. 83; p. 96; p. 79.

<sup>51</sup>Fries, p. 44.

<sup>52</sup>Fries, p. 44.

of time and place and manner, adjectives, demonstratives, interrogatives, and indefinite pronouns; his "substitute" words include the so-called personal pronouns, some "indefinites," some "negatives," and do or so as substitutions for whole form-classes;<sup>53</sup> his words for negative or affirmative distribution, namely, some or any, too and either, already and yet, still and any more--all variables respectively dependent upon their positive or negative involvement in the sentence.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, Dr. Hall shies away from the time-honored parts of speech of Latin vintage, since he finds them for the most part inapplicable to the non-Romance languages. Instead, he has recourse to form-classes, free forms, bound forms, etc. While the system of these and other modern linguists may seem newfangled to the diehards who were cast according to the Latin mold, nonetheless its phenomenal success is its best recommendation. It lifts the smokescreen of confusion in the foreign language student, as Dr. Hall points out. For example, the word reflection, fitted into the traditionally Latin mold, is doubtlessly classified as a noun. "But," asks Dr. Hall, "is it a noun as much as book?" He answers: "Hardly." It implies movement. And yet by some artificial convention it is treated not as a verb, but as a noun which, as a noun, can take the suffix s.<sup>55</sup> Wherever the traditionally Latin-modelled grammar is in vogue, cases of this type can be multiplied a hundred

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<sup>53</sup>An example of do and so would be the following: Do you promise to take this man as your lawful husband? I do. Are you thinking of staying united until death parts you? I think so.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-56; p. 64. Negative and positive distribution can be exemplified thus: I can talk English too; I cannot talk English either. They have some; they don't have any.

<sup>55</sup>Hall, Leave Your Language Alone, p. 58.

times. By setting up useless hurdles for the student of the non-Romance languages, such Latinized patterns prove wasteful in the economy of learning. There is no need to belabor the point at issue: It is linguistically clear that the lack of "Latinized grammar" in any language in no way disparages that particular language. Upholding this principle, Dr. Hall summarized it very strikingly when he said: "(A)t the outset avoid saying every sentence must have a subject and a predicate."<sup>56</sup>

Previously it was stated that some, not understanding what constitutes a language, oppose a technically under-developed language because they see no traditional grammar, a limited vocabulary, and a language as yet not committed to writing. The principles on Grammar have been expressed on the foregoing pages. As to the limited vocabulary of a language, it is sufficient for this study to remember that "every language has foreign borrowings of one sort or another. . . . Borrowing between languages normally occurs in connection with cultural contact." It is through assimilation of loan-words that many new words become "firmly ensconced in the vocabulary"; it is through various changes and modifications that many words take on extended meanings. Whereas all languages have absorbed words from other languages, nevertheless pidgin languages are characterized by their small vocabulary, a feature which does not disqualify them as languages.<sup>57</sup> While the limited vocabulary of Pidgin "may have a wider range of meaning than the corresponding form in English, the context normally makes it quite clear what is being referred to. . . ."

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 93-94.

<sup>57</sup> Hall, Leave Your Language Alone, pp. 146-149.

Pidgin words, though resembling English taboo-words, often "are not the same in meaning as their English cognates." Do not alter them or tamper with them because in such "linguistic matters, ignorant meddling does far more harm than good."<sup>58</sup>

It must be further noted that "language can be expressed in symbols."<sup>59</sup> "People often object to letters of alphabets that they are not familiar with." Professor Hall says of them:

Such people apparently go on the assumption that the Lord created the universe, the world, the Garden of Eden, the animals and fishes and flowers, Adam and Eve, and the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. . . .<sup>60</sup>

In reference to the alphabet Eugene Nida observes;

The ideal alphabet for any one learning to speak a language is a phonemic alphabet. Such an alphabet would represent each distinctive sound by one symbol. By a distinctive sound we mean one which makes a difference in meaning.<sup>61</sup>

There is a caution uttered by Dr. Hall: "Of course, the phonemes of one language are not the same as those of another language."<sup>62</sup> Precisely because of this William Gray could add that "skills in recognizing words vary to a considerable extent among languages." "The problem of developing word recognition skills is a relatively simple one in languages in which the words are highly phonetic and spelt regularly. It is far greater in languages which are

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<sup>58</sup> Hall, Hands Off Pidgin English, p. 97, 30, 29, 93, 99.

<sup>59</sup> Unesco, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 123.

<sup>60</sup> Hall, Leave Your Language Alone, p. 36.

<sup>61</sup> Nida, p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> Hall, Leave Your Language Alone, p. 36.

more or less phonetic." "In the case of highly phonetic language, by the end of the first year most of the basic facts and principles involved in the recognition of new words have been introduced; in the case of less phonetic languages, only the simpler and more widely used aids can advantageously be introduced." "In the case of highly phonetic languages rapid progress should be made in learning. . . . In languages in which the spelling and sounds of letters are irregular, far less progress in mastering word elements is possible during the primer period. . . ." <sup>63</sup> There is another aspect of alphabet which commands notice in the learning of language. It was formulated as a linguistic principle by William Gray and it reads, "Literacy experts agree that it is much easier, other things being equal, to teach children and adults to read and write when the language has a small alphabet." <sup>64</sup> In this connection it is interesting to be told: "The languages of Polynesia, extending from Hawaii to New Zealand, have relatively short alphabets." <sup>65</sup> New Guinea's Neo-Melanesian has only twenty-two letters, and (unlike English) does not need c, q, x, and z.

Another basic norm in foreign-language teaching comes from Dr. Hall: "(I)n order to learn a new language, we must understand the grammatical structure, not only of the language we are learning, but also of the one we are using as a point of departure." <sup>66</sup> To ignore the learner's vernacular

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<sup>63</sup> Gray, p. 273; p. 167; p. 136; p. 135. (Quoted in this order.)

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>65</sup> Frank C. Laubach, Teaching the World to Read: A Handbook for Literacy Campaigns (London, 1948), p. 54.

<sup>66</sup> Hall, Hands Off Pidgin English, p. 116.

while teaching him a foreign language is, according to Dr. Hall,

(W)asteful of time and effort, and permits many mistakes through carry-overs from his own language, which neither he nor his teacher is able to analyze or correct effectively. . . . When the learner is studying English as a foreign language, the teacher should use the learner's native language as a basis of comparison with English.

. . . . .  
(B)ase instruction on its relation and similarities to English, at the same time pointing out and warning against the difficulties caused by the differences.<sup>67</sup>

In full agreement with this is the conviction of Dr. Fries:

The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.<sup>68</sup>

Another language-learning principle is the prominent advice, "Learn by doing." Kinesthetically interpreted, it means developing certain muscles through the handling of specified objects. In the El Paso Public School Manual teachers are told to "provide experiences that give the child ideas to be expressed through creative handling of materials."<sup>69</sup> That notion is too limited; as understood in this paper, learning by doing denotes not only learning from personal experience, but also learning from the experience of others. With respect to the first, Jespersen, convinced that people never learn to talk unless they do talk, insisted that "pupils must talk."<sup>70</sup> When Eugene Nida set down the proper sequence of language-learning by stressing

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<sup>67</sup> Hall, Hands Off Pidgin English, pp. 117-118.

<sup>68</sup> Fries, pp. 8-9.

<sup>69</sup> El Paso (Texas) Public Schools, Manual of Aids and Devices for Teaching Beginning Non-English Speaking Children (El Paso, 1946), p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Jespersen, p. 182.



listening as first, speaking as second, reading as third, and writing as fourth, he explained:

We have tackled the study of language from the wrong end. We are like the man who thinks he can learn to swim by reading books about swimming. In actuality, we learn by doing.

.....  
A person never learns to play the piano simply by studying the mechanism of the instrument, observing the manual skill of others, and learning how to read music. . . . (I)t requires practice. . . . Furthermore, the beginning piano student does not learn to play pieces just by practising chords and scales. He must attempt to play real pieces if he is ever going to play them. The same applies to a person learning a foreign language. . . . To learn to speak, one must speak.<sup>71</sup>

Understood in a wider sense, learning by doing implies that men learn from the experience of others. It is this that Mr. Groves had in mind when he wrote as follows about the apparently appalling failure to consider the experiential data of neighbors:

In general, Government education in the Territory has played a lone hand. There appears to have been little effort to study educational systems and policies in other lands; nor any exchange of ideas with adjacent Territory of Papua or with such places as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Fiji, the Philippine Islands, and the East Indies, where much might have been learned.<sup>72</sup>

Certain systems and policies are tried out and found defective and modifications must be made or perhaps the entire system must be scuttled. Such experiences provide the basis for the educational policies in the respective countries. Thus, the policies in vogue, provided they have some years of history behind them, may be indicative of some uniquely significant information. While reflecting much constructive thought, they perhaps do not

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<sup>71</sup>Nida, pp. 2-22; pp. 26-27.

<sup>72</sup>W. C. Groves, B.A., Dip.Ed. (Melbourne, 1936), Native Education and Culture-Contact in New Guinea (Melbourne, 1936), p. 163.

always enjoy universal application and at times yield at best only tentative conclusions. Nonetheless, the words of Thomas A. Dietz may be pertinent in many instances: "These findings are no mere theorizing, but have been adequately proven over many years in the field, which is after all, the only conclusive test."<sup>73</sup> Within the ambit of the literature on the choice of an appropriate medium of instruction the prevailing policies that are mirrored may well serve as a possible guide in detecting and determining a suitable medium elsewhere.

In fine, it may seem almost platitudinous to add to the above mentioned principles one pervasive, underlying principle whose presence or absence spells either effectiveness or ineffectiveness respectively. It is the principle regarding association of ideas. Listed in Johann Herbart's famous five steps for teaching, it does not become especially valuable in the mental growth of pupils until the curricular content is linked to previous experiences in at least one of their fivefold concomitant phases, be it according to their vividness, their recency, their primacy of occurrence, or their similarity and contrast to other life-situations.<sup>74</sup> And in accordance with the frequently made suggestion, teachers will try to keep these associations pleasant.<sup>75</sup> Of course, the final proposition appended by Dr. William Gray is not overlooked either, scil., those in charge of fundamental education do

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<sup>73</sup>Thomas A. Dietz, The Problem of Language: Paper No. 1--Pidgin (Port Moresby, Papua, 1954), p. 4.

<sup>74</sup>Elijah and Cole, p. 27.

<sup>75</sup>El Paso (Texas) Public School Manual, p. 8.

well to create activities which are very apt to secure a coveted satisfaction and which are rewarding.<sup>76</sup>

While proceeding with the next chapter the writer finds it helpful to incorporate the foregoing principles: They are the criteria with which he can assess the literature concerning the medium of instruction that is to be used in New Guinea schools.

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<sup>76</sup> Gray, p. 157; p. 129.

### CHAPTER III

#### CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH FINDINGS SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF EDUCATIONAL AND LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLES

##### A. Should One Language Displace a Babel of Tongues?

Even today there exist countries in which the debate over a suitable medium of instruction is a constant harassment. It is a problem whose complexity is such that a final solution is almost a will-o'-the-wisp. Where a number of languages are spoken, possibly they have only a small currency, the question is, "Which language is the most suitable vehicle of social intercourse? Which one best promotes literacy? What medium of teaching is most appropriate in the classroom?"

As a preliminary to an analysis of the literature apropos of the language problem confronting the Territory of New Guinea, the preceding Chapters touched upon several salient angles. It is these and their ramifications which are now in need of a close and critical inspection. The writer, therefore, takes cognizance of the reasons adduced both for and against the adoption of Neo-Melanesian in lieu of English as New Guinea's instructional medium. This necessarily engenders a search into seven specific spheres:

(1) Is it imperative that for its acculturation New Guinea have but one common language in place of its multiplicity of languages? (2) Can the alternative approaches to New Guinea's intercommunication problem be eliminated so that

only Neo-Melanesian and English are rivals calling for attention as media of instruction? (3) It is unreal and illusory to insist on English as the sole instructional means of teaching New Guineans? Difficult and possibly even useless for later village-life, can English be justifiably chosen as an appropriate medium? (4) Is it possible to eradicate Neo-Melanesian? Might its banning from the Territory atrophy the cultural development now taking place through contacts of the Pidgin-speaking natives and whites? Does its disuse arrest the natives' growth toward literacy? (5) Can it be established that Neo-Melanesian is a language in its own right and that it has intrinsic merit as a medium of instruction, and that the charges levelled against it are without solid foundation? (6) Can Neo-Melanesian serve as a bridge to the learning of English? (7) What shall the medium of instruction be, English or Neo-Melanesian for the lower grades and English for the higher ones? Latent in the literature amid a welter of words there are answers to these questions. Whereas uniformity is missing in the solutions recorded, the writer now seeks to find out which of them can be substantiated and which ones are probably biased or which ones are emotional rather than rational in tone.

Among the two million New Guineans, living not only in the alluvial lowlands of the swampy and at times totally inundated Sepik Valley or Ramu Valley or Markham Valley, but also in the precipitous mountain areas of the Highlands, travelling (though it is only walking three or four hours away from a village) is a veritable nightmare.<sup>1</sup> The rugged terrain may be responsible for the

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<sup>1</sup> Trusteeship Council, Report on New Guinea: 1953, Supplement No. 4 (New York, 1953), p. 2. (Official United Nations Records.)

origin of the numerous languages in New Guinea. At any rate, it certainly aggravates the prevalent difficulties among the natives wishing to converse with one another in a common tongue. Living in language groups that often-times do not exceed five thousand speakers, these natives frequently are at a loss in understanding their neighbors. Is it any wonder that excessive fragmentation of indigenous society took place? Is it surprising that the village remains the largest political unit? As yet there is no political organization on a regional scale. But as more and better airstrips and roads are being built, as bigger numbers of natives sign contracts as indentured laborers, as greater influence of the civil administration extends over the interior of New Guinea and brings about a consequent blending of cultures, a common language seems not only desirable but also essential. In his Study of Discrimination in Education Charles Ammoun states: "The interests of the national community as a whole also cannot be ignored, and it is undoubtedly of advantage to everyone if the entire population of a country understands the same language."<sup>2</sup> Speaking about parallel cases, however, more than one language could conceivably co-exist without seriously hampering progress. Writes Charles Ammoun:

In a number of countries there are two or more distinct groups traditionally speaking and writing languages which, while different, are nevertheless of approximately equal value as instruments of expression . . . and can be used fairly easily as vehicles of instruction.

.....  
Countries in which two or more languages are regarded as official and enjoy complete equality of status, at least in matters of education, are: Belgium, provinces of Canada, Finland, Switzerland, the Union of South

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<sup>2</sup> Charles D. Ammoun, Study of Discrimination in Education (United Nations, New York, August 1957), p. 91.

Africa, the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic, Yugoslavia, the Free Territory of Trieste, Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, India, Poland and Romania.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, while it is ideal it does not seem absolutely necessary that there be but one language. In the light of this, it is interesting to find this in Unesco

Studies on Compulsory Education:

South Asian countries have tended to adopt on grounds of national unity one national official language, and are attempting to make it predominant in schools. Still others, while adopting a national language, have allowed the mother tongue considerable use in the school, either as a first or second language. In non-self-governing territories the prevailing practice is either to adopt the language of the administering power as the language of instruction or to begin with the mother tongue and teach the language of the administering power as a second language, until it becomes the language of instruction in the upper grades.

Wherever one language is selected as the official language of the country, there, if the country is multilingual, other languages are bypassed. This may be interpreted as the suppression of the other native languages and (as history shows) cause a concatenation of untoward events. There may be inter-group conflicts because "some communities may reject a language chosen for them to be used in their school . . . considering their own tongue a 'better' form of speech, or the language chosen as the tongue of an 'inferior' population." Moreover, "it sometimes happens that the people whose mother tongue has been chosen for school use as the medium of teaching will reject such a policy and prefer the official or any other second language, on the grounds that the use of their own mother tongue will prevent them from making quick contact with

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<sup>3</sup>Amoun, pp. 92-98.

<sup>4</sup>Unesco, Compulsory Education in South Asia and the Pacific (Drukkerij Meijer, Holland, 1962), p. 21.

Western civilization."<sup>5</sup> Besides, over and above the socio-cultural factors just alluded to, there are political and linguistic aspects: When an official language can be decreed by legislation, the language becomes a sort of political football which suffers the consequences of administrative changes by being kicked out to make room for another.<sup>6</sup> Of course, from the linguist's point of view, the suppression or imposition of any language is a virtual impossibility. If language is "inextricably bound up with the whole life experience of the native users of that language," if "the bond between a people's language and its way of life is so intimate that anything that threatens the one is a menace to the other as well," if it "is a part of a people's cultural inheritance and therefore may not be discarded arbitrarily by others," then a mere fiat of an administrative authority will not suffice to displace it.<sup>7,8,9</sup> That, however, would have to be done were an official language to be established in any multilingual society. While the business of government admittedly is easier in a monolingual than in a multilingual nation, the optimum advancement in literacy is not given a boost by demanding an official language among polyglots; in fact, it is hampered, especially where the

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<sup>5</sup> Unesco, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education (Unesco, France, 1953), pp. 13-14.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language (Ann Arbor, 1945), p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. C. E. Beeby, Report to the New Zealand Government on Education in Western Samoa (Wellington, 1954), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Dietz, The Problem of Language: Paper No. 2--Media of Language in Papua and New Guinea (Port Moresby, 1955), p. 27.



individual language-groups are (as in New Guinea) so small that to most of the other segments of native life it is a foreign language. As such, it would not cater to the doctrine of going from the known to the unknown, even were its grammatical structure or syntax similar to the surrounding native languages.

Hence, it is advisable to heed these words:

(C)ompulsory teaching in a single language, and a fortiori, prohibition of the teaching of the language and cultural heritage of a distinct group, have in some cases constituted a formidable instrument of oppression and discrimination. . . .

.....  
Each group should be allowed to decide, without outside interferences, upon the importance which it attaches to the use of its mother tongue in the individual process, as any decision taken by others in so important a matter may reflect a discriminatory intent.<sup>10</sup>

Although the single languages of New Guinea do not enjoy a wide currency, they are nonetheless the mother tongues in the respective areas and are spoken frequently. Thus, "it is often questioned whether the official language can be effectively learned and preserved as a cultural achievement, since it is not used at home and because of the short duration of school life for most rural children."<sup>11</sup>

#### B. Other Avenues to Solving New Guinea's Linguistic Problem

After the exploration of the possibilities of introducing one official language into New Guinea, the writer must consider alternative approaches to the language problem. There are four things to be looked at: (1) Should all mother tongues--at least those whose linguistic population is large--be

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<sup>10</sup>Ammon, p. 90.

<sup>11</sup>Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 12.

selected as the media of instruction? (2) Should English be used? (3) Is Neo-Melanesian a good medium of instruction? (4) Should there be a combination of either Neo-Melanesian and English, or native vernacular and English? Regarding the use of mother tongues, there are almost unanimous voices stating that "ideally, every pupil should be taught in his own language, at least in the primary stage."<sup>12</sup> Adverting to the psychological reason for this, Victor Murray says that it leads the child "from what he knows to what he does not know."<sup>13</sup> It is simpler for the school-child. Even more explicit is the explanation of Unesco experts:

We consider that the shock which the young child undergoes in passing from his home to his school life is so great that everything possible should be done to soften it, particularly where modern methods of infant teaching have not yet penetrated to the school. He passes from being one of a few children under his mother's eye to being one of a large group under a teacher. Instead of running about and shouting he is usually expected to sit still and be quiet. . . . Almost everything is different from home and it is not surprising that many children find difficulty in adjusting themselves to their new surroundings. If the language in which all these bewildering new communications are made is also different from the mother tongue, the burden on the child is correspondingly increased. . . . To expect him to deal with new information or ideas presented to him in an unfamiliar language is to impose on him a double burden, and he will make slower progress.<sup>14</sup>

Almost identical in tone is Dr. Cook's expose:

From living a relatively free and untrammelled existence he is transposed into a regime where he is one of a class, systematically exposed to new and changing experiences which demand his full attention. New information and ideas are presented to him as fast as he is able to absorb them. New

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<sup>12</sup>W. E. Ward, Education News, IV, No. 3 (Sydney, June 1953), p. 7.

<sup>13</sup>Victor A. Murray, The School in the Bush (London, 1929), p. 1935. (Quoted by T. A. Dietz in His Paper No. 2 on Media; p. 15.)

<sup>14</sup>Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 48.

companions and new teachers call for rapid emotional and social adjustments on his part. If to all these demands on the child's power of understanding and adjustment the handicap of a strange tongue is also added, the burden becomes almost overwhelming.<sup>15</sup>

Elsewhere Dr. Cook stresses another feature attached to the influence of one's mother tongue, particularly for early schooling:

The primary school child in any society needs the socializing influence of his mother tongue. . . . By the time the young child comes to school he has attained a considerable mastery of a complex instrument of learning, his mother tongue; and this forms a natural and easy means for his further linguistic, intellectual and emotional development. To use any language other than the mother tongue is to jettison the child's acquired store of experience and language, and to compel him to seek new symbols of communication and thought. Every word of the mother tongue has a meaning whereas a word in another language may be only an equivalent of a very approximate equivalent.

.....  
An important advantage in the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the lower primary school is the degree of freedom which it provides for the child to express himself as well as respond to and participate in the activities of the school. This is important emotionally and intellectually to the child, making the work of school satisfying to him. The fluency of the child also enables the teacher to make certain that the child understands what is being taught and that he learns actively rather than passively.<sup>16</sup>

Among other advantages one cannot forget how the use of the mother tongue is an invaluable link between the home and the school. In connection with this the experts observe as follows: "The use of the mother tongue will promote better understanding between the home and the school when the child is taught in the language of the home. What he learns can easily be expressed and applied in the home."<sup>17</sup> Naturally, therefore, the British Administrations in Africa

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<sup>15</sup>Dr. P.A.W. Cook, African Languages and English in Education (London, No date), p. 26.

<sup>16</sup>Cook, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup>Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 48.

adopted the policy of employing the vernacular languages wherever possible in the pre-primary and primary education. There is the same reasoning behind it all:

This system . . . places the minimum strain on the young child and thus enables him to learn faster and to acquire more easily the habit of study. He lays a more solid foundation than he would if he were fumbling in a foreign language.<sup>18</sup>

Reflecting the opinions of various Departments of Education, the policies regarding the media of instruction in multilingual countries indicate how linguistic problems are being coped with throughout the different sectors of the world. Africa, for example, standing on the threshold of literacy, at the present time reveals a remarkably concerted and uniform plan of action: Its choice of an efficient vehicle for imparting knowledge came as the outcome of much trial-and-error experimentation in the past. When a person looks at the Union of South Africa he sees that the mother tongue is being utilized as the sole medium of teaching even though English and Afrikaans are compulsory subjects in the lower grades. Moreover, in Sudan, as well as in most of North Africa, classical Arabic is the chief means of intercommunication. Algeria, despite its many French citizens, is talking Arabic at all stages of its school schedule. If one passes on to Mozambique, Portuguese Guinea, and Angola, he hears only vernaculars during the teaching of Portuguese to the respective natives.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Unesco, Report on Vernacular Education by the Government of the United Kingdom in response to Unesco's request (1951), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>Amoun, p. 99; p. 110; p. 113.

In the Americas the language-problem seems more involved than in Africa. According to some there are 558 languages in North America, South America, and Central America. One finds it almost incredible, but it is true. And it is significant that thus far only English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Danish, but no native languages have attained the status of official language. But as the benefits that accrue from the use of the mother tongues are being better realized right along, there are many improvements in the offing. Among the heterogeneous Indian tribes in the United States it is said that no less than 250 dialects are being spoken by three hundred thousand individuals, but their value as media of communication in the classroom has not been sufficiently considered in the past.<sup>20</sup> Specifically in order to meet this lack of understanding the El Paso (Texas) Public Schools recommended the use of Manual of Aids and Devices for Teaching Beginning Non-English Speaking Children. Seeking to give outlines of approaches to acquiring English more quickly, this book is an excellent milestone for the Spanish-speaking Mexican child entering school at six, and forced to reach by the close of his elementary school career, an educational level commensurate with the native English-speaking child.<sup>21</sup> In Mexico a national campaign was initiated in 1944. Through this, reading and writing came to be taught to the people in their own native languages (of which there are more than fifty). Spanish, however, was allowed to persist. The object in promulgating this paper against illiteracy was "to make the Indians

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<sup>20</sup> Announ, pp. 112-113.

<sup>21</sup> El Paso (Texas) Public Schools, Manual of Aids and Devices for Teaching Non-English Speaking Children (El Paso, 1946).

realize that besides being members of a distinct group of people they belong to a wider unit, which is interdependent with the group. . . . (T)he indigenous cultures are a valuable and distinctive element to the national culture. An attempt has been made, accordingly, to preserve the languages by which these cultures can express themselves."<sup>22</sup> Approximating the Mexican policy are the "Rural school centres" of Peru. In April, 1946, a Decree authorized them to teach in the Indian languages proper to the country. Ecuador is also implementing a scheme whereby its six hundred thousand Indians will be enabled to receive lessons in their own languages. "The principal difficulty is the almost complete absence of teachers with a knowledge of the wide range of indigenous languages. Efforts are being made to correct this situation at several rural teachers' training colleges."<sup>23</sup> There are other countries which fostered the native mother tongues of the land, especially those embracing large linguistic populations. Among these are: India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Philippine Islands. India has Hindi as its official language, but recognizes fourteen regional languages as equally national; Pakistan, multilingual as it is, made Urdu its common language and its medium of instruction even though English is a compulsory subject and the vehicle of teaching at the University level.<sup>24</sup> Malay, alias Bahasa Indonesian, has to be learned by the seventy-two million Indonesians speaking two hundred different languages.

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<sup>22</sup> Ammoun, p. 113.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>24</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular in Education, p. 29; Ammoun, p. 110.

While it is used by many of them, nevertheless it is to some extent a foreign language for millions of others because it is different from the well-developed but complex Javanese which is spoken by thirty million people. It is unknown too to the fifteen million who are familiar with Sundanese and Madurese.<sup>25</sup>

The Philippine Islands present a very unique but particularly perplexing language-problem. The responsible school authorities of that country encounter no less than eight languages and eighty-seven distinguishable dialects. Of the latter, twenty-four are authorized for school purposes. As far back as 1939 the Department of Education issued a brief whereby the local dialect, as an auxiliary medium of instruction, was permitted under certain conditions. This has not only not been rescinded, but it has been encouraged as something to be "enforced"; and the reactions of the field as to its result should be sought. "But English is still a medium of instruction, with Tagalog required by law as the national language. In addition to this, it should be remarked that high schools are obligated to teach Spanish."<sup>26</sup> Talking of the larger Christian Missions in New Guinea, Thomas Dietz claims that there was a time when they preferred "to standardize a particular native language for a large area, the principal argument being that it is easier for a native to learn another native language than English, because the structure is similar."<sup>27</sup>

Emphasizing the instructive character of effectiveness in teaching, some of the foregoing programs with respect to using the mother tongue at school

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<sup>25</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages, pp. 37-38; Ammoun, p. 108.

<sup>26</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages, p. 36; Ammoun, pp. 108-111.

<sup>27</sup> Dietz, Paper No. 2, p. 1.

merit special attention, largely because they were conducted as scientific experiments. What are some of the research findings? Dr. Eugene Nida sets forth these:

In Mexico until 1936 Spanish was taught exclusively in all schools located among Indian populations, and all vernacular languages rigorously suppressed. . . . Nevertheless, the programme failed, and . . . there was a certain amount of antipathy developed against Spanish (the linguistic medium). By 1936 it was apparent to the Government (that a mistake had been made). (T)he Government reversed its policy and embarked on a programme of literacy in the vernacular Indian languages . . . especially in the lower grades. . . .

. . . . .  
The emphasis upon the Indian languages . . . was not dictated by any desire to perpetuate the indigenous languages. On the contrary. . . , those with experience were convinced that by a proper emphasis upon the native languages it would be possible to supersede them more readily than would otherwise be the case.<sup>28</sup>

This is corroborated in a Memo from the United Nations:

The Mexican Government has realized for years that if the millions of Indians who are Mexican citizens are ever to learn Spanish, which is the national language, they must first be taught to read and write in their native Indian language; and then, when they are literate, learn Spanish.<sup>29</sup>

Similar data exists for both Peru and the Navajo Indian experiment. Before 1945 Navajo children speaking their mother tongue during school hours were punished. Teachers looked askance at any attempt to use Navajo as a transition mechanism in the process of learning to read. Then this experiment was conducted:

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<sup>28</sup> Nida, Language Learning, II, No. 1, January to March, "Approaching Reading through the Native Language" (University of Oklahoma, 1949), pp. 16-20; also Dietz, Paper No. 2, pp. 15-16.

<sup>29</sup> Dr. Felix Walter, Memo from the United Nations (English Language Program No. 18 of the UNO Radio, May, 1954), p. 4; Dietz, p. 40.



A number of Navajo students were given classes by Navajo instructors and in the Navajo language. The use of Navajo was no longer forbidden; but the students were encouraged to learn as much English as possible. . . . (In class) English was studied, but the methods were strictly functional. . . . By the end of the first year of the experiment it was found that the Navajo students had learned more English than any previous group upon whom English had been "forced." They had in addition acquired a great deal of knowledge through the content courses given in Navajo. But above everything else, these students were far better oriented as regards their social outlook than had been the case with previous groups.<sup>30</sup>

Possibly the widest dimensions in this area of language-research come from the Philippines. In the province of Iloilo a six-year procedure was started in 1948 to determine the relative effectiveness of the local vernacular, Hiligaynon, and English as means of instruction. The Filipino educationists were acutely concerned over the gap between the home and the school. Since 1898 the language of instruction had been English. Despite that fact, English was seldom spoken in most homes, so that the school-children lived in an English world at school and in a "vernacular" world at home. Thus, there was a situation in which the majority of the parents of the school-children were illiterate, and the language of the school was foreign. To establish a bridge between the home and the school, Dr. Pedro Guiang and the superintendent of the Iloilo province, Mr. Jose Aguilar, maintained that while bilingualism was practical, it was necessary to abandon English in order to teach the children through their mother tongue. On the hypothesis that in the first two grades there should be taught one language, the vernacular, and in the third grade English should be introduced, Jose Aguilar approached the problem experimentally and "with due care so as to satisfy the requirements of scientific

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<sup>30</sup> Nida, p. 19.

procedure and criteria with regard to the control of the factors involved, and the validity and reliability of the tests used." The two groups which Dr. Aguilar set up were called the experimental group (whose classes were to be in the vernacular) and the control group (whose medium was to be English).

"Teachers for these classes were carefully chosen and equated as far as possible for educational qualifications, experience and efficiency, and an equal number of schools was represented in each group. In every group one school was located in an urban area, three in agricultural areas and three in fishing villages. Care was taken to ensure that the schools selected in each district were representative of the poorest, average, and richest economic levels. The pupils in the two groups were similarly matched in age, intelligence, economic status and other factors. To measure achievement, equivalent series of tests were used, one series in English and another in Hiligaynon. These included four tests in arithmetic. . . , five tests in reading. . . , and four tests in social studies." The academic and non-academic results were measured at the end of each year and suggest these conclusions:

1. (T)he pupils in the experimental group were superior to those in the control group in social studies. The difference was statistically significant.
2. (I)n arithmetic and reading the pupils in the experimental group had an advantage over the pupils in the control group, but the differences were not statistically significant.
3. (I)n language the pupils in the control group were better than those in the experimental group--as they had also been after the fifth year of the experiment; however, the difference was not statistically significant in either year.
4. (T)he pupils in the experimental group were more emotionally stable and more emotionally mature than the pupils in the control group, and they tended to be more dominant than the pupils in the control group.

5. (I)n spite of its apparent recession in scholastic achievement in the fourth year of the said experiment, the experimental group maintained its superiority in the fifth and sixth years of the experiment.
6. With regard to non-classroom accomplishment, there is evidence of the experimental group's superiority over the control group in such factors as ability to organize and express thought, ability and interest in telling news and stories, regularity of school attendance, social applications, and other relevant characteristics.

Thus, the general synopsis is that "the results were not strictly uniform and consistent except in indicating generally the superiority of the experimental group over the control group."<sup>31</sup> "What was most unexpected was the fact that the experimental group (the group instructed in the vernacular during the first two years of the study) caught up with the control group in knowledge of English after six months of being exposed to this language as the medium of instruction."<sup>32</sup> "The Philippine school system was taken by storm, so to speak, as the result of the Iloilo experiment. . . ." "The community school movement and teaching through the vernacular in the first two grades are permanent forward steps in the development of the Philippine educational system. . . ."<sup>33</sup>

As typical for Africa the trend in Liberia is summarized by the Literacy Director in these words:

We have found that, as in other countries, it is easier and a quicker task to teach the foreign language, which in this case is English, after

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<sup>31</sup> Unesco, Education Abstracts: Planning for Curriculum Revision and Development--Digest of Selected Studies, X, Nos. 4-6, April to May, 1958 (Unesco, Paris, 1958), pp. 43-48; Dietz, Paper No. 2, pp. 16-18; Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages, pp. 125-130.

<sup>32</sup> Dietz, Paper No. 2, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Unesco, Education Abstracts, p. 46.

the adult has learned the techniques of reading and writing in his native tongue.<sup>34</sup>

As early as 1929 Professor D. Westermann was aware that Africans "would learn English better and more quickly if first they had learned to understand their own language in its grammatical construction, in composition, in reading and in debating; if they had learned to think in their own native language."<sup>35</sup> A Unesco report,<sup>36</sup> as well as the experience of G. J. Platten, is in full consonance with this. Having in mind the use of the vernacular for the first years of schooling, Platten claims: "This method will not put the students who later study another language at any disadvantage; it develops personality, it allows the earlier introduction of content material."<sup>37</sup>

Especially in favor of the mother tongue for the first few grades are those who ponder the brevity of the pupil's school-life. In behalf of the African it is stated clearly:

A powerful argument for the use of the mother tongue in the primary school is the short duration of the schooling received by so many Africans. It is safe to say that for the average child his school life is so short that he will not have the opportunity to learn enough of a foreign language to enable him to cope with it satisfactorily as a medium of instruction nor

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<sup>34</sup> Cited by Dietz, Paper No. 2, p. 14, from an Official Report for Liberia in response to a request by Unesco, 1951, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Dietz, Paper No. 2, p. 14. He quotes Professor Westermann from Africa, II, October, 1929, p. 350. The place of publication is not given.

<sup>36</sup> Unesco, Report on Language Teaching in African Schools (London, 1940 and 1951), p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> J. P. Platten, The Use of the Vernacular in Teaching in the South Pacific--Technical Paper No. 44 (South Pacific Commission, Noumea, June, 1953), p. 7.

will his knowledge of the language be a sufficient and satisfactory goal in itself. . . . (P)rovision must be made for education of all types of pupils. It is therefore of fundamental importance that the work of the school should be satisfying and effective for those children who go no further than the fourth year.<sup>38</sup>

When one sees the foregoing reasons for the use of the mother tongue, one might think it is a watertight case. After all, would there not be a going from the known to the unknown, from the easy to the more difficult, thus ensuring a subject-matter more readily within the grasp of the pupil? There are better chances for using sentences that may be heard in real life or in meaningful situations. Possibly, too, there is less danger of diction and ideas which are disjointed and out of context. This, of course, is conducive toward promoting understanding, keener interest in school, and less waste of time in assimilating content courses. Despite these advantages, there are arguments adduced for displacing the mother tongues of the natives of New Guinea with either English or Neo-Melanesian, the two alternative roads to New Guinea's language-problem. These can be treated under separate headings: (1) Should Neo-Melanesian be the only medium of instruction? This, in turn, demands settling some of the criticisms against Neo-Melanesian. (2) Is English an apt vehicle of communication for the New Guinea native? But before launching into these two spheres, the writer wishes to advert to the following prefatory observations from the experts of Unesco: (1) "A lingua franca is not an adequate substitute for the mother tongue unless the children are familiar with it before coming to school."<sup>39</sup> Ad rem is the fact that Neo-Melanesian is widely

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<sup>38</sup> Cook, p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 69.

known to the Melanesian child before he begins school. As such, it is on an equal footing as the mother tongues. (2) It is admitted by Unesco experts that "circumstances may justify abandoning the mother tongue in the child's formal education."<sup>40</sup> Regarded as unsound objections to the mother tongue, are these:

- (a) This language has no grammar and no alphabet. The writer in answer reiterates the acknowledged principle which avers that "there is nothing in the structure of any language which precludes it from becoming a vehicle of modern civilization. Similarly, any unwritten language can be written."
- (b) The child already knows his mother tongue before he comes to school. Two replies to this are: He has learnt it enough for his own childist purposes, but not completely enough for later life; secondly, the child is not only learning his mother tongue from the school, but also other things via his mother tongue.
- (c) The use of the mother tongue will prevent the acquisition of the second language. However, as already indicated on the preceding pages, recent experience in many places proves that an equal or better command of the second language can be imparted if the school begins with the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, subsequently introducing the second language as a subject of instruction.
- (d) Using the vernacular impedes national unity. Granted that the business of a country is easier in a monolingual than in a multilingual nation, nevertheless national interests are best served by optimum advancement of education; this, in turn, can be promoted by the use of the local language as a medium of instruction, at least at the beginning of the school programme.<sup>41</sup>

What are the circumstances which the meeting of Unesco experts deemed valid in various degrees either temporarily or permanently for the substitution of a language other than the mother tongue as the medium of instruction? They include these:

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, pp. 48-50.

- (a) Inadequacy of the vocabulary. Where there is insufficiency in vocabulary for the needs of the curriculum there a second language should be introduced.
- (b) Shortage of educational materials. The difficulty is not so much one of printing as of finding or training competent authors or translators, obtaining paper and other supplies, distributing the finished products to almost inaccessible regions, and getting the necessary funds to operate.
- (c) Multiplicity of languages in a locality or country. If a given place faces the problem of providing schooling in each mother tongue, some of which have few speakers, it is possibly confronted with nearly insuperable difficulties such as these: 1) Lack of personnel, 2) want in resources, and 3) selection of one of the many languages as the medium of instruction.<sup>42</sup>

1) Lack of personnel. Referring to the dearth of teachers who are qualified, Professor Fries says:

In spite of the fact that there has (sic) been more than a hundred years of vigorous linguistic investigation in accord with sound scientific methods, very little of this investigation has actually got (sic) into the schools to affect the materials and methods of teaching language. . . .<sup>43</sup>

In development of this topic Unesco linguists add: The problem of the teacher is a crucial one. . . . While educators generally agree with the maxim 'As the teacher is, so is the school,' hardly any tenet . . . is more widely admitted as a principle or more often ignored in practice.<sup>44</sup>

Quoting a report to Unesco, Thomas Dietz wants it well known that 'a teacher must not be considered as trained to do an adequate job of teaching English or French or Spanish as a foreign language simply because he speaks the language as a native and has studied the conventional grammars of them. For this purpose special techniques and materials specially controlled in

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<sup>42</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, pp. 50-51.

<sup>43</sup> Fries, p. V (Preface).

<sup>44</sup> Unesco, Compulsory Education in South Asia and the Pacific, p. 21.

vocabulary, cultural content, and presentation of structural complexities are highly important.<sup>45</sup>

In this, of course, there is a practical angle: The education and training of teachers is a long and costly business, particularly if they have to be taught to teach in a language other than their mother tongue.<sup>46</sup>

Since the numerical size of language-groups in New Guinea varies and since there are hundreds of languages, it is common to see villages separated by only a few miles which cannot understand each other's speech. When (as has been noted earlier in this paper) the learner's language is alien to the teacher, pitfalls cannot be foreseen and errors cannot be properly corrected precisely because the teacher is unable to compare the two languages in a scientific way.<sup>47</sup>

2) Want in resources. It may happen that a mother tongue is rejected as a medium of instruction when it has little or no reading material to entertain or improve the student, when it lacks follow-up material as well as textbooks adapted to the native speakers. Experience has shown that such a lack "may easily cause disappointment and resentment, and also reversion to illiteracy."<sup>48</sup> This is reported by linguistic experts:

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<sup>45</sup> Dietz, Paper No. 2, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Cook, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. p. 40 of this paper for the citation of relevant linguistic and educational principles stressing teachers be trained.

<sup>48</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 52.



Literacy can only be maintained if there is an adequate supply of reading material for adolescents and adults as well as for school children, and for study as well as for entertainment.<sup>49</sup>

### 3) Selection of one of the languages as medium of instruction.

A language may be chosen as a medium simply because a large segment of society knows it or because it is simple in make-up. But Unesco experts issued a caution regarding the selection of a mother tongue as a lingua franca: 'Our view on the use of the lingua franca will depend in each case on how familiar the lingua franca really is.'<sup>50</sup> Apart from the fact that the adoption of a native tongue as a lingua franca may be redolent of favoritism toward a 'section of the population at the expense of others' and, as such, 'be fraught with difficulties arising from local prejudices and jealousies,' 'there is at present no sign of any existing vernacular becoming a lingua franca' which could replace Neo-Melanesian.<sup>51,52,53</sup> Lastly, even those whose mother tongue was standardized as the lingua franca of the country 'may be unmoved by the benefits to be derived from the use of the mother tongue in education and may be convinced that education in the mother tongue is to their disadvantage' and may bar

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<sup>49</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 69 (12).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

the 'door to skilled jobs and leadership in commercial establishments or in civil service . . . or travel and study abroad,'<sup>54,55</sup>

Some, therefore, propose the introduction of a world language such as English; others avow that Neo-Melanesian meets all present needs, since today it is identifiable among the Melanesians in any one of these guises--either as a de facto though unofficial official language, or as a lingua franca, or as a vernacular and mother tongue, or as a second language. Thus far, this paper discussed first of all the choice of one native language as a medium of instruction; secondly, it investigated the possibility of the individual native languages ad media, and (in their default) the selection of a few major and widely used native tongues for the whole country; now it extends to still other avenues of approach to New Guinea's linguistic problem. Certain inferences may be anticipated from the preceding data. By being indicated more explicitly, they gain in value. Hence, these and other things with bearing on the topic, are best high-lighted in distinct categories, viz., English as a medium; and, Neo-Melanesian as a medium.

#### C. English as a Medium of Instruction in New Guinea

Intimately bound up with literacy is the language of instruction. Educators have explored the use of individual vernaculars and regional vernaculars with greater currency. Speaking for New Guinea, Monographs on Fundamental Education says:

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<sup>54</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 53.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

The use of regional vernaculars does not make for true political unity among the people of the territory as a whole; it may result in emphasizing jealousies and rivalries . . . between the adherents of the different missions with which such regional vernaculars are associated; it requires that European officers and others shall learn all of the regional vernaculars or else work through an educated, English-speaking intermediary; and it adds to the labour and cost of producing reading matter (recreational and instructional) for the ever-increasing number of literate adults and school children.<sup>56</sup>

In replacement of the present vernaculars, especially Neo-Melanesian, many suggest English. Accordingly in the policy statement on Native Education the Honorable Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, regulated as follows:

One of the greatest benefits we can confer on the native is to raise his standard of living. An important means to this end is an improved and reformed horticulture. Another major contribution is literary education, and particularly the teaching of the English language. The ability to speak, and better still, to read the English language will open the gate to far wider fields of experience and knowledge. It will provide a means of communication and understanding between native and European.

.....  
'(M)ass literacy' means ability to read and write a common language. That common language is to be English. I set the goal and the Administrator and the Education Department, in co-operation with the Missions, are to work out the best means of reaching it as early as possible. That is their first target.<sup>57-58</sup>

When in July, 1953, the United Nations Trusteeship Council condemned the use of Neo-Melanesian as a medium of instruction, it was nonetheless "glad to note that it is the policy of the Government to use only English in institutions of

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<sup>56</sup> Unesco, Monographs on Fundamental Education, alias The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education (Unesco, Paris, 1953), p. 111.

<sup>57</sup> Department of Education, Culture and Curriculum: Study Guide No. 10 (Port Moresby, October, 1957), p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> D. M. Cleland, Administrator, Education Policy (Port Moresby, April, 1955), p. 6.

higher education."<sup>59</sup> Searching for a reason justifying the advocacy of English, Mr. Dietz seems to have no difficulty in believing that

(W)here a wider view of the Territory is to be taken, the advantages gained by selecting as a lingua franca a language which is a world language and which already has an extensive written literature are very great. For this Territory, English is the logical choice, for it is not only the language of Administration, but conforms to both of the above criteria, i.e., it is a world language . . . , and it has a written literature second to none.<sup>60</sup>

If Africa could be regarded as a parallel situation, perhaps the comment of Harold Jowitt would carry some weight in this matter:

The importance of English is self-evident where in a British territory there is interdependence between the two races. The correct teaching of English will lead to wider horizons, to more efficient service, and ultimately to the enrichment of vernacular literature by means of enriched experiences.<sup>61</sup>

In the recommendation that English be substituted for the vernaculars or Neo-Melanesian, there seems to be the assumption that English can be just as easily learned as the other languages. The Current Affairs Bulletin points out that "in any discussion it is always asked: 'Why couldn't the time and energy in teaching in Pidgin be used to better advantage in teaching the natives English and making them literate in English?'"<sup>62</sup> Another argument advanced at times for the preference of English over other languages, is "that it will improve

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<sup>59</sup> Trusteeship Council, Report on New Guinea: 1953--Supplement No. 4 (United Nations, New York, 1953), p. 25.

<sup>60</sup> Dietz, Paper No. 2, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Harold Jowitt, Principles of Education for African Teachers (Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., London, 1932), p. 154.

<sup>62</sup> University of Sydney, Current Affairs Bulletin, XIV, No. 12 (Sydney, September, 1954), p. 189.

relations between black and white by obviating misunderstanding."<sup>63</sup> Added to this there is the idea that the natives desire English as the key that opens the door to freer association on an equal basis with the European and ensures them of certain jobs or means whereby they can grow rich.<sup>64</sup>

Against all the reasons favoring English in New Guinea, the following cannot be ignored: While English may be a world language and while it may possess abundant literature, of what use is it if it cannot be learned well enough for practical purposes or if its advantages as such a language and with such a literature are offset by other factors? The assumption that "a Melanesian could learn to speak and write with equal ease in either Pidgin or English, given the same investment of time and energy on his part and his teachers'," is contrary to all experience which informed persons have. Moreover, present-day conditions in New Guinea disprove the assertion that because English is missing there is social and economic inequality being fostered between the whites and blacks. Lastly, it seems absurd to hold that New Guineans, even those eager to learn English, are debarred from eking out a satisfactory livelihood simply because they cannot speak or write English, as if English were some kind of open-sesame. These matters individually deserve further attention.

English, as observed by the Current Affairs Bulletin, "is much more difficult for speakers of other languages than we customarily realize, especially

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<sup>63</sup> W. C. Groves, Native Education and Culture-Contact in New Guinea (Melbourne, 1936), p. 115.

<sup>64</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 111.

when the learner's native language is completely unrelated to English. This is so because

Not only do our words cover very different ranges of meanings from those of Melanesian languages, but the syntax of English--the way in which we combine words to make phrases and sentences--is immensely complicated. When the vocabulary used is reduced. . . , the grammatical complexity of the language remains the same, since this is the most difficult aspect of English for the learner. . . . It is estimated that the ordinary native can learn Pidgin well enough in six months to be instructed how to act as a native medical assistant. For him to achieve a similarly effective command of English would require six years or more and a shorter exposure to English is likely to leave him with only a half-learned, broken jargon. Literacy, also, can be attained more easily and quickly in Pidgin than in English. The current spelling of Pidgin . . . is relatively accurate and consistent in representing the phonemes of the language, especially in contrast to the spelling of English. Even those whose mother tongue is English spend years in learning its spelling. . . . In Pidgin, on the other hand, natives can become literate in a very short time.<sup>65</sup>

Continuing the same argument, C. H. Wedgwood writes:

For English, however well it is taught, cannot be easy to any Melanesian or Papuan speaker; its sounds, its grammatical structure, are wholly alien; and the culture of which it is both a part and an expression is utterly unfamiliar if not practically unknown to most of them. To use a language as an effective medium of communication, to be able to think in it, requires a very considerable mastery of it and frequent opportunities of using it. To hope that any large majority of New Guinea natives will achieve such mastery over English within the next hundred years, is to be over-sanguine.<sup>66</sup>

The difficulties of English evidently originate from its intrinsic make-up, for Dr. Pike with an eye on the non-phonemic spelling of English recorded the finding that "children learning English take approximately three times as long to learn to read and write as comparable children do to read Spanish, which is

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<sup>65</sup> University of Sydney, Current Affairs Bulletin, p. 190.

<sup>66</sup> C. H. Wedgwood in Unesco's Use of Vernacular Languages, p. 112.

written unambiguously."<sup>67</sup> A similar observation is given by Dr. Robert Hall of Cornell University:

In English-speaking countries, children spend eight and more years in school trying to learn to read and write, and often at the end of that time they are still only half-literate--due, not to any innate stupidity on their part, but to the unphonemic and illogical nature of English orthography. On the other hand, in such countries as Italy and Germany, school children become completely literate in the first two years of instruction. . . .<sup>68</sup>

Thomas Dietz, the linguist attached to the Department of Education in New Guinea realized the same.

(T)he structure of English is completely different from that of New Guinea languages in every way. In addition, the phonetics of English is extremely difficult for such natives, not only because of the different sounds, but because of their difficult arrangement, particularly the consonant clusters, unpronounceable to most natives of this Territory until special instruction is given.

.....  
The vocabulary of English is not similar to the native vocabulary, either in concrete things or in concepts.<sup>69</sup>

A few details well illustrate the intricacies of English. Thus, noting the grammar, for instance, Frederick Bodmer has this:

A difficulty facing the foreigner is the adverbial flexion. 'If we accept the expression to run fast, we ought not to resist to come quick . . . English has never been consistent about this custom.

.....  
(M)any flexional endings like the s in he eats, contribute nothing to the meaning of a statement; context, and context alone, dictates which we choose.

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<sup>67</sup> Dr. K. L. Pike, Phonemics--A Technique for Reducing Languages to Writing (Ann Arbor, 1947), p. 208.

<sup>68</sup> Dr. Robert A. Hall, Jr., Hands Off Pidgin English (Ithaca, New York: Sydney, Australia, 1955), p. 112.

<sup>69</sup> Dietz, Paper No. 2, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Frederick Bodmer, The Loom of Language (New York, 1944), p. 100; p. 159.

Teachers must remember that New Guineans, confronted with discriminating sounds both for production and for recognition, must treat individual sound segments in context.<sup>71</sup> This becomes very complicated indeed when the language itself is entirely foreign to these natives, and when there are sound features like the following which separate meaning: race and raise; niece and knees; cease and seize; seal and zeal. It would be a mistake to think that sound of a language implies only pronunciation, talking without a brogue or an accent, for that (as was already indicated) need not be a "major handicap."<sup>72</sup> For actual comprehension of speech, as Dr. Fries assures,

It is the patterns or contours of pitch which constitute a linguistic problem. . . . These are important for one would learn to understand and speak English. It is not just what you say; it is how you say it, that counts.

. . . . .  
Contrary to our common and traditional views, experience has shown that the covering intonational patterns are more important for understanding in rapid conversation than are the exact phonetic qualities of the separate sound segments. If the pitch sequences are right, the foreign speaker will be more likely to be easily understood, even if the individual sound units are incorrect, than he will be if the individual sound units are nearly correct and the intonation contours are wrong.<sup>73</sup>

And lest he create the wrong impression, Professor Fries at once continues:

But the intonation curves are not the only covering patterns in English that need attention for the sake of understanding and being understood. English rhythm--the matters of stress and speed--is an important part of the general frame in which the sounds of English speech occur. . . . The following sentences, with the two syllables printed in capital letters, can be used as illustration: 'The DOCTOR's a SURGEON. The DOCTOR's a good SURGEON. The DOCTOR's a very good SURGEON. The DOCTOR's not a very

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<sup>71</sup>Fries, p. 112.

<sup>72</sup>Cf. the preceding pages of this paper, i.e., pp. 32-33.

<sup>73</sup>Fries, pp. 20-23 (Adapted).



good SURgeon.' In speaking each of these sentences in accord with the rhythm of American English there would usually be only two strongly stressed syllables and the actual time between the stresses would be approximately the same in spite of the difference in the number of intervening syllables. It is this reduction of weight given to the syllables between heavy stresses and the crowding of them in speed which causes foreigners great difficulty in understanding the stream of English speech.<sup>74</sup>

Turning to another aspect, the totally different cultural background of the New Guinean and the native English speaker, Thomas Dietz remarks: "This is the root of the differences in vocabulary, especially the differing concepts. . . . The native not only thinks about different things, but thinks about them in a different way."<sup>75</sup> As an anthropologist doing field work in New Guinea during 1936, W. C. Groves (who incidentally became the Director of Education in Papua and New Guinea after the War) suggested that for the effective teaching of the rudiments of English to the Melanesian all lessons should be based on the local environment:

This presupposes the use of suitable, carefully compiled text-books presenting the lessons in right sequence, and developing them round such local materials as the pig, the house, the fish, the net, the dance, the garden with its yams, and so on.<sup>76</sup>

Such a range of topics is extremely narrow. And yet, without it a teacher cannot hope to hold the attention of his Melanesian student, possibly causing him to become very disinterested and to play truant. On the other hand, unless a New Guinea native understands normally everyday English of the native English speaker, can he appreciate the bulk of English literature? And will English,

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<sup>74</sup>Fries, p. 28.

<sup>75</sup>Dietz, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup>Groves, p. 118.

even as a world language, be of any practical value to him? This was euphemistically expressed by Mr. Neve, head and teacher of Brandy Government School during 1946: "English will be understood by natives only when they can understand the ideas normally expressed in English."<sup>77</sup> Even if natives were subjected to learn terms for things outside of their cultural horizon, they would most likely forget them soon after school is over. In their native villages there would be no use for such common English words as represent things foreign to their cultural background. Nothing in native life corresponds to the English speaker's concept of suit, dress, overcoat; refrigerator, television set, iron for pressing clothes; bed sheets, pillow slips, mattresses; pie, cake, apples; forks, saucers, platters; drug-stores, hardware stores, factories; barns, sky-scrapers, subways; railroads, busses, street-cars; traffic-lights, movies, telephones; magazines, newspapers, picture-albums; cities, states, or political parties; electric lights and motors. The list could be lengthened almost indefinitely. It would be wrong to leave the New Guinean under the false impression that learning all these English items ensures him of an easier life and a cornucopia. No matter how much "magic" English he has absorbed, he will always be in a real world where work is essential. When one adverts to the grasp of English and to any secretarial job, two entirely unrelated elements, one wonders where the assumption arose that a clerk must be versed in English in order to be qualified. Secretaries in America find it adequate to record their business in English; those in France, in French; those in Russia, in Russian; those in India, in an Indian language; those in

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<sup>77</sup>Dietz, Paper No. 2, p. 6.

Indonesia, in Bahasa Indonesia. By the same token, New Guineans should be eligible for local secretarial jobs if they can record in Neo-Melanesian. Where, of course, dealings with a foreign country are necessary, it is an advantage to know the respective language of that country. But is it necessary that all Englishmen learn Italian just because England may wish to carry on a certain business with Italy? By this same token, must all New Guineans learn English in order that New Guinea may sooner or later take care of transactions with Australia?

There are arguments for the wholesale introduction of English into New Guinea. For one thing, the United Nations Trusteeship Council ordered it. But of themselves such arguments may not seem convincing to everyone, especially when they concern the adoption of English from the outset of school. Aware of the fact that "none but a vernacular literature will ever reach the mass of the people, so that the adoption of English would restrict the availability of literature of any kind to the select few who had learned enough English to read and appreciate it," W. C. Groves wrote in 1936:

In any case, educationally the aim is the development of the native along his own lines. And if the scope of education is to be restricted, and its wider aims subordinated to the teaching of English simply for the doubtful advantage of facilitating intercourse between the native and the occasional European, the gain will be incommensurate with the loss.<sup>78</sup>

There is some consensus of opinion in this, for C. H. Wedgwood reported as follows to the United Nations:

But even in the elementary and higher elementary schools, after from seven to eight years of school life, it seems doubtful whether a child will have gained sufficient familiarity with English to be able to think

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<sup>78</sup>Groves, p. 115.

in it and to apprehend truly new ideas presented to him in it, particularly since it is a language which he seldom (perhaps never) hears spoken out of school. If we fail to enable the child to understand the significant relations of facts to each other, to think about them intelligently, and also to express his thoughts, then the education which we give him is a failure. . . . If we use as a medium of instruction a language so alien as English, we are putting a premium on parrot-learning and we enormously increase his difficulty in thinking about and understanding the unfamiliar world of facts and ideas to which his school lessons are introducing him.<sup>79</sup>

Some people proposed the universal use of English in New Guinea in order to make sure no barriers would exist between the natives and the Europeans.

This is well answered by Mr. Grooves:

To those who know New Guinea, this suggestion will not appear reasonable, first, because the Europeans in New Guinea, with the exception of missionaries, insistently use Pidgin in their dealings with natives; and secondly, because of the lack of opportunity in New Guinea for its regular use, few natives will actually learn English thoroughly enough to express their thoughts clearly in it; and this means that the chance of misunderstanding will not become less, but greater. Already this has been amply proved to be so, in the case of some natives whose imperfect use of English caused European ridicule.<sup>80</sup>

The fact is, the use of Neo-Melanesian is extensive in all teaching of Catholicism; and the relationship between the Catholic missions and the natives is congenial and amicable. The very same could be said for other segments of society in New Guinea.

It is claimed by some favoring the introduction of an all-English program that only through English can the native gain access to worthwhile literature. The contention underlying this is that Neo-Melanesian (or any other New Guinea

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<sup>79</sup>Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 114.

<sup>80</sup>Groves, p. 115.

language) is too limited to allow for nuances of meaning or for certain abstract concepts. To this W. C. Groves replies:

Those who advance the argument of the insufficiency of native languages for modern ideas and needs are apt to forget the no less important fact of the limitations of English itself in the native background. For there are many native concepts that simply cannot be expressed precisely in English. . . . (T)he two linguistic media belong to two entirely different social settings, each being a product of a different material and social background. It is quite impossible to translate some of the most important native terms. . . . Words which cover the social order, express religious beliefs, moral values of specific technical or ritual proceedings, can be rendered accurately only by reference to the social organization of the tribe, their beliefs, practices, education and economics.<sup>81</sup>

A further refutation regarding the inadequacy of native-language literature is the fact that various books and translations in Neo-Melanesian, as well as in other native languages, are available. The Witness, the Diocesan Newspaper of Dubuque, recently noted the newest addition, the complete Catholic translation of St. Mark's Gospel into Neo-Melanesian.<sup>82</sup> There is evidence of translations of the whole Bible in many different native languages, including some of the Melanesian type. Neo-Melanesian Bible Histories, Catechisms, Lives of the Saints, Sermons on the Sunday Gospels, Primers, have been extant for years at the headquarters of Catholic Missions both at Alexishafen and at Vuhapope. There have been mimeographed journals for disseminating the current news and other information. Among them are Nius Katolik, Frend bilong Mi, Lae Garamut, Wewak Nius, Rabaul Nius, and Madang Nius. Other publications which enhance the position of Neo-Melanesian and show that subtle abstractions can be made

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<sup>81</sup>Groves, p. 111.

<sup>82</sup>Dubuque, Iowa, The Witness, November 27, 1958, p. 7, column 6.

in languages other than English, include a cook-book with numerous recipes adapted to New Guinea foods, a text-book for the training of medical personnel, one for carpentry, another on store management, and a handbook entitled "Medical Treatment and Preventive Medicine". In addition to prayer-books (such as Buk bilong Beten) there are amazing song-books whose verses are made up of perfect rhymes, especially song-books such as Buk bilong Singing and Hola Hi Hola Ho. Further Neo-Melanesian precision is witnessed in H. C. Gaywood's translation of passages from Sophocles, Dr. Hall's rendition of Daedalus (replete with details about the wax wings which melted as Icarus came too near to the sun), and Murphy's translation of Anthony's speech from Julius Caesar as well as of the National Anthem. The misconception about the all-importance of English is further corrected by Mr. Murphy's finding that Neo-Melanesian is "quite as exact as any native language and more adaptable" and by Mr. Groves' observation that "if it be true that the native tongues are incapable of expressing certain abstract ideas, surely it is possible, through education, to enrich them by the addition of the necessary features. . . ."83,84

Those who inveigh against the use of a native language or of Neo-Melanesian and therefore propose English as the sole medium of instruction in New Guinea schools, should be aware of the difficulty of English, as well as of the fact that it has been tried and has left much to be desired. Dr. Hall cites this as proof:

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<sup>83</sup>Thomas Dietz, The Problem of Language: Paper No. 1--Pidgin (Port Moresby, 1954), p. 3.

<sup>84</sup>Groves, pp. 115-116.

This point has been verified in practice time and time again. In Papua (New Guinea), where great emphasis was laid on exclusive use of English in the schools (in accordance with Sir Hubert Murray's puristic principles), the local Europeans boast of the absence of Pidgin; and yet Dr. Lucy Mair, in her book Australia in New Guinea, reports of the Papuan situation (p. 154): 'Insistence on English has doubled or tripled the difficulties of teachers and pupils. She tells of scenes in which both native teacher and native pupils were repeating by rote a series of English sentences of whose content neither the instructor nor the learners had the faintest idea--a situation strangely familiar to anyone who has observed or read descriptions of attempts in English in such places as Puerto Rico, India, or Africa.<sup>85</sup>

Another illustration took place in Port Moresby:

It is significant, in this context, that the members of the Village Council of Hanuabada, in Papua, who live in very close and daily contact with English-speaking Europeans, and all of whom have learnt English in school, have abandoned their original intention of holding their meetings in English. They found that they could not express their thoughts sufficiently well in it. The meetings took on a new life when it was decided to carry on all business in Motu, the mother tongue of most members, and one in which the non-Motuan were fully bilingual.<sup>86</sup>

Mr. Groves describes the same picture in these words:

My own experience as a teacher in native schools has shown that to teach English to natives in New Guinea, with their limited opportunity of practising its use outside of the classroom, is a very difficult task. And from the observations I made recently at the Government schools in the Territory, I would say that it has not been even moderately successful.<sup>87</sup>

In respect to this the writer recalls that during his ten years' stay in New Guinea, he hired a number of New Guineans who had studied English at school. On many occasions certain jobs, that had been assigned, remained undone. Upon investigating the reason for that, the writer invariably discovered that the

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<sup>85</sup> Hall, p. 123.

<sup>86</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, pp. 112-113.

<sup>87</sup> Groves, p. 118.

native in question simply had not comprehended what was required of him; and yet, for fear of embarrassment, he never asked that the original English order be repeated. Subsequently orders were issued in Neo-Melanesian and there was never any more misunderstanding.

Paralleling the New Guinea cases are those of such places as New Zealand, India, Mexico, and the Philippines. It may help to hammer the point at issue if one or the others reveal their experiences with English as the medium of instruction. New Zealand, for example, had this set-up in the hope of fostering good will between the whites and the Maoris:

From the early days of the settlement there has been no educational discrimination between the Maori people and the white settlers. All educational facilities are open to all. The mistake, unwittingly made, was in assuming that the educational system which was best fitted for the white settlers was also best fitted for the Maori. In this the Maori's special aptitudes have tended to be overlooked. Also the fact of the Maori's tribal way of life was not taken into account and this proved very hurtful.

.....  
(T)he proportion of boys and girls who leave school early with low educational qualifications is higher among Maoris than among Europeans. One reason is that the language of instruction is English and some Maori children are handicapped by their limited grasp of this language.<sup>88</sup>

A kindred condition prevailed in India:

In India, where for many years English has been favored as the medium of instruction, experience is leading to a reaction in favor of the vernaculars. Mr. A. Abbott and Mr. S. H. Wood, in their report on Vocational Education in India, state that 'Our experience of the high school, limited as it is, persuades us that this use of English as the medium of instruction lies at the root of the ineffectiveness of many of them.'<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ammon, Study of Discrimination in Education, p. 83; p. 110.

<sup>89</sup> Dietz, p. 22.



In view of the foregoing ideas, one cannot help pausing to reflect: As a foreign language, reflecting not only different vocabulary and grammar but also an entirely alien culture, how can English be recommended--at least in the lower grades--as a medium of imparting knowledge? How could sentences be heard in real life? How could lessons be founded on previous experience and actual life-situations? What chances are there of learning standard English when its subject-matter composed of ordinary and every-day relations is nearly altogether unrelated to the areas of life that surround the native? On the other hand, if an English Reader is designed particularly for the locality, for New Guinea in this case, it will prepare the native most inadequately for any radio programs or English newspapers or English literature which he might become interested in after he leaves school. Should he, however, learn the many commonplace things that relate to the foreign background of English, what are the possibilities that he will remember them, since after he leaves school he may never hear them again in this native setting? It is to be feared that where strangeness of the language and the culture bring meaningful learning to a minimum, there the laws of vividness as aids to mental growth, are virtually non-entities. Moreover, too early an introduction of difficult school-matter not only delays and interferes with learning to read properly, but also risks the begetting of discouragement and its sequel--truancy. All in all, the principles for and against English are subject to close scrutiny; and it seems that thus far it is better to prefer a native language to English as the medium of instruction in New Guinea schools--at least for the beginning of school-life.

D. Neo-Melanesian as a Medium of Instruction  
in New Guinea

In a series of animadversions on Neo-Melanesian the United Nations

Visiting Mission to New Guinea included these words:

Like the last Visiting Mission, the Mission met few indigenous government employees with whom it could converse in English. The Mission is strongly of the opinion that Pidgin is not only not a suitable language for instruction, but that it has characteristics derived from the circumstances in which it was invented which reflect now outmoded concepts of the relationship between indigenous inhabitants and immigrant groups. Therefore, it believes that the most energetic steps should be taken to eradicate this jargon from all instruction given within the Territory, and that plans be urgently developed to eliminate it from the Territory completely. In this connexion, the Mission wishes to draw attention to the fact that substantial portions of the population, particularly in the Highlands and the Sepik area, are as yet unfamiliar with Pidgin; in these areas the use of Pidgin should be officially prohibited immediately.<sup>90</sup>

Shortly after the above-mentioned statement was released to the press, the Russian delegate to the Trusteeship Council took up the cudgel and accused Australia, the Administering Authority in New Guinea, of tolerating racial discrimination in allowing such a divisive element to exist among the natives and Europeans of New Guinea. This was gratuitously asserted and thus Mr. William Forsyth of Australia gratuitously denied it. When Leon Pignon from France demanded as a member of the Trusteeship Council that Pidgin be abolished because it "may do great harm to the native psychology" and because he felt that "a prerequisite for the development of the territory should be the use of English, the special representative of Australia, Mr. A. H. Jones, defended the use of Pidgin."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Trusteeship Council, Report on New Guinea, 1953, Supplement No. 4 (New York, 1953), p. 25.

<sup>91</sup> Hall, p. 101.

Critical, too, were the newspaper reporters who witnessed in February of 1954 the inability of Simogon, come from New Guinea to pay his respects to Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh in Canberra but unable to make himself understood to the Duke. Referring to the incident, they had an opportunity to spume forth their venom against Pidgin. And they did. The meeting of Simogon with the Queen and Duke was alluded to in the Sydney Morning Herald as "the greatest condemnation of Australia's thirty-five-year-old rule in New Guinea." Another thought that the use of Pidgin constituted "a serious blot on Australia's administration of New Guinea." It was also remarked that "the greatest objection to Pidgin is that it has no literature and never can have any," that "it is just another dialect," that it is "not an aid, but a serious obstacle to education," that it is "more ambiguous and less useful than would be any one of the established native tongues."<sup>92</sup> At times Pidgin is disparagingly identified as a "caste language," a "corruption or perversion of English," a "confused medley," a "mongrel jargon," a "barbarous gibberish."<sup>93</sup> Other derogatory terms for it are a "degenerate language," or a "bastard language." Sometimes it is a "trade language."<sup>94</sup> Another reason Pidgin is undesirable in the minds of some, goes back to Pidgin's origin, in part "the uninhibited vocabulary of British traders and seamen."<sup>95</sup> Its apparent inelegance was probably at bottom of the Trusteeship Council's opinion that "it has

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<sup>92</sup>Hall, pp. 102-103.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 103; p. 24; p. 18; the jacket of Hands Off Pidgin.

<sup>94</sup>Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 109.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

characteristics derived from the circumstances in which it was invented." Other objections that are found from time to time against the use of Pidgin, are: "(I)t is inadequate for use in . . . education" and it is not a "stepping-stone to learning English but rather a hindrance."<sup>96,97</sup> The Report on New Guinea made by the Visiting Mission of the United Nations in 1946 interjects a further consideration:

The use of Melanesian Pidgin has unwittingly been an effective obstacle to the advancement of the people in the past and, needlessly to say, could be a serious one in the future. It has limited their participation in the Administration to minor clerical and other duties by effectively preventing any capable individuals from seeking training in order to qualify for higher posts. In the field of education the dependence on vernaculars or Melanesian Pidgin seriously delayed the introduction of secondary and higher education. . . . During past sessions of the Trusteeship Council, for example, discussions have occurred concerning indigenous representation in the Legislative Council, and the encouragement of advanced elements of the people to take an interest in its proceedings. . . . The value and effectiveness of this participation must be seriously reduced if the indigenous members or observers do not know English.<sup>98</sup>

The foregoing objections are like so many bromides or canards in the eyes of those who favor Neo-Melanesian. The answers they give by way of refutation merit attention, and may provide useful clues in determining what medium of instruction is best for New Guinea schools. Considering, first of all, the United Nations Trusteeship Council's "pronouncement of July, 1953," Dr. Hall dismisses the "blast against Pidgin" as "at variance with the facts. No

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<sup>96</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages, p. 115.

<sup>97</sup> Hall, p. 115.

<sup>98</sup> Trusteeship Council, Report on New Guinea, 1956--Supplement No. 5 (United Nations, New York, 1956), pp. 39-40.

recommendation could, if carried out, prove more harmful to the well-being of the Territory." Here is his reason:

So far as the facts are concerned, of course. . . , if Pidgin has been used successfully as a medium of instruction for the last fifty years, that would seem to be ample evidence that it is suitable for that purpose. . . . (M)issionaries have made use of Pidgin as a means of teaching. . . . In Government schools likewise, Pidgin has been a lingua franca wherever pupils from two or more language backgrounds have come together in the classroom, and has served successfully as a vehicle for arithmetic, geography, and social studies. Nor has its usefulness been limited to merely elementary subjects. . . . Pidgin manuals have been prepared for such subjects as economics, medicine, and handicrafts, and could equally well be prepared in any other subjects desired.<sup>99</sup>

Dr. Hall thinks that the social function of Pidgin presumably was meant in the "partially intelligent" statement that "Pidgin has characteristics derived from the circumstances in which it was invented which reflect now outmoded concepts of the relationship between indigenous inhabitants and immigrant groups." In reply Dr. Hall finds it necessary to see what makes a language:

The Trusteeship Council mission's grasp of the facts of language does not seem too firm, anyhow, in view of the remark about Pidgin being 'invented.' (N)obody ever invents a language successfully.

. . . . .  
(Y)ou can't create a language by fiat, or by deliberate introduction of terms. . . . Linguistic behaviour is the outcome of collective activity, extending over many generations and countless speakers. Even if an individual does introduce a new term, or even invent one (. . . witness . . . George Eastman's kodak), the ultimate fate of such inventions depends on the speech-community as a whole. Dante, for instance, invented certain new Italian words and used them . . . but they . . . never 'caught on.'

. . . . .  
Occasionally, people have tried to invent whole linguistic structures, in artificial international languages like Dr. Zamenhof's Esperanto; but such creations are noted for their lack of vitality, and never come to real linguistic life. . . . Every normal language, including Pidgin, is the anonymous collective creation of generations of speakers. . . . It is quite true that Melanesian Pidgin . . . originated in a caste situation, and served to keep the native in an inferior position vis-a-vis the

<sup>99</sup>Hall, p. 103; p. 121.

European. But this is no longer its main function, and need not be its function at all. . . . For any given language, likewise, the social conditions of its origin are irrelevant to its present function or merits. . . . All languages, as languages, are equal in merit, Pidgin no less than any other.<sup>100</sup>

Previously it was mentioned that "every language is thus inextricably bound up with the whole life experience of the native users of that language."<sup>101</sup> This dovetails with Dr. Hall's concept of language, as delineated above; and it leads up to a question of first magnitude: Can Pidgin be abolished? The answer one gleans from the literature is a definite "No." As part and parcel of a culture, Pidgin must be seen in its extension. The Current Affairs Bulletin seems very conservative in its estimate that Pidgin is "known to between one-third and two-thirds of the natives, is learned by a great many children at an early age, and is becoming creolized in an increasing number of cases."<sup>102</sup> It is today an inter-tribal vernacular, "the common language of the people of the territory."<sup>103</sup> As a lingua franca for Melanesians "it enables people of different languages to get along together, whether they live in neighboring villages a few miles apart in the mountains of New Guinea, or whether they come from places as far apart as the Sepik . . . and Buka. . . ."<sup>104</sup> "Wherever European--whether missionary, official, or commercial operator--speaks with a

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<sup>100</sup>Hall, p. 103; p. 98; pp. 104-105.

<sup>101</sup>Cf. p. 28 of this paper (Fries, p. 57).

<sup>102</sup>Sydney University, Current Affairs Bulletin, p. 189.

<sup>103</sup>Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 109.

<sup>104</sup>Hall, p. 50.

native, Pidgin bridges the linguistic barrier; wherever natives from two different language groups meet, Pidgin enables them to converse; and wherever Europeans with no other common tongue meet, Pidgin is used with complete adequacy."<sup>105</sup> Mr. W. C. Groves adds:

Being a means of communication between natives speaking different languages, between natives and Europeans, and even between Europeans of different nationalities who have no other common language, Pidgin solves the enormously complicated problem of the multiplicity and variety of vernaculars in this Territory.

.....  
Pidgin is a language in its own right, mainly by virtue of its being built on the basis of Melanesian linguistic structure. The English element in it is primarily one of vocabulary . . . Pidgin is recognized by the natives who use it as their language, developed by them, enabling them to communicate not only with Europeans but with other natives whose vernaculars differ from their own.<sup>106</sup>

Dr. Margaret Mead reports having visited villages in the deep bush, in the mountains where no white person had ever been before, and having found children at play, practising their Pidgin on each other. . . . By now, Pidgin English is very widely used as a lingua franca among Melanesians, in all parts of the Territory, and not only where they are in contact with Europeans, but in all situations where two or more languages meet."<sup>107</sup> In short,

Today there can be few villages within those parts under full government control (that is, throughout the major part of the Trust Territory) where at least one or two men cannot speak Pidgin fluently; while in those villages which are situated near a township such as Rabaul or Lae, or near

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<sup>105</sup>Dietz, Paper No. 1--Pidgin English, p. 12.

<sup>106</sup>W. C. Groves, Official Circulars: Summary on Pidgin (Director of Education, Port Moresby, 1954), p. i and p. ii (sic).

<sup>107</sup>Hall, p. 17.

a centre of business such as a large plantation, one finds that usually even the children are bilingual, and use Pidgin as well as their mother tongue in their play together.<sup>108</sup>

Hence, Dr. Hall asks: "Just whose language is Pidgin? Is it the Europeans' . . . or the Melanesians'?" His answer is there can be no doubt that in Melanesia "Pidgin is the 'property' of the Melanesians" rather than that of the Europeans.<sup>109</sup> "Pidgin is used more among Melanesians than it is between Melanesians and Europeans, and has come to be a true 'linguistic cement' for the Territory, not a language foisted by European invaders on helpless natives."<sup>110</sup> As deeply embedded in the very culture of the people, Pidgin cannot be wiped out without antagonizing those who are Pidgin-speakers and thus Dr. Hall aptly reflects: "I don't know how much the Melanesians would enjoy being told that their culture and traditions had no value "by denying them their speech."<sup>111</sup> In this, Dietz defends Hall's opinion:

(T)he suppression of the Pidgin language (were that indeed possible) would have precisely the same effect as it always has when a conquering nation has decreed that the language of the people will cease to be spoken. It would simply go 'underground.' No decree can ever succeed in 'abolishing' an established language. The only result of such an attempt would inevitably be to create a great deal of resentment, and to have the 'abolished' language continuing in use, though no longer officially observed or utilized to advantage by Government and other agencies.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>Unesco, pp. 106-107.

<sup>109</sup>Hall, p. 20 and p. 22.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-48.

<sup>112</sup>Dietz, Paper No. 1--Pidgin, p. 13.



The writer, when he delved into the history of Pidgin, has already indicated a further substantiation of this matter: It was noted that the German Imperial Government tried to oust all Pidgin seventy years ago, but failed miserably even though at that time the language had not become nearly so deeply ingrained as now. Despite declarations against it--that holds for Papua too, where Sir Hubert Murray's purism forbade its introduction--it has spread and seems to be becoming more widely known from year to year.<sup>113</sup> Of particular interest at this stage, is the remark of the United Nations Visiting Mission to New Guinea in 1956 according to which natives themselves want to shelve Pidgin because they regard it as inferior to English. The Report is

One of the most widespread demands which the Mission encountered throughout the Territory was a desire to learn English. New Guineans were critical not only of Pidgin, but also of such vernaculars as Yabim and Kotte. . . .

. . . . .  
The enthusiasm for English does not appear to have developed from any particular encouragement which the people received in the past, but has arisen due to their own conviction that Pidgin and vernaculars are inferior to English. Some of them at least are aware of the increasing complexities of life, resulting from contacts with the modern world, and the ignorance which their ignorance of a metropolitan language poses in successfully participating in this life. Even on a less sophisticated level, the attitude toward English is no new phenomenon, for it is well known that the relative great wealth of Europeans and their skills and ability in contrast to the indigenous population have frequently been attributed by the latter to a knowledge of English. And it is possible that some today believe in the automatic and magical powers which the acquisition of English will confer on them.<sup>114</sup>

Regarding the foregoing paragraph, the writer believes that it is a case in which an observer tried to prove too much and in reality proved nothing

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. p. 6 of this paper.

<sup>114</sup> Trusteeship Council's Mission, Report on N.G. (1956), p. 40.

whatsoever. Having spent ten years among the natives of the Sepik District, the writer agrees that there is a widespread interest in English, at least if a tour of the area is a guided one, such as the Visiting Mission made. While there is agreement about the fact, there is disagreement about the interpretation of the fact: The writer submits that when a native studies English, he is doing so not because he happens to despise his Neo-Melanesian as entirely inferior, but because certain beneficial results can accrue from knowledge of the extra language. When an American studies German or French in school, does that necessarily imply that he is dissatisfied with English? The writer furthermore feels that the current enthusiasm for English stems from the sound pedagogical training which prompted the respective English teachers to stimulate interest in English by extolling the worth of its knowledge. Any person acquainted with New Guinea's school system is well aware that the Department of Education with the cooperation of Government and Christian Mission schools fostered English in schools, even conducting examinations for Teacher-Training Certificates in the medium of English. Every Syllabus dating back the last ten years would attest to this fact, notwithstanding the words of the United Nations' Report that "the enthusiasm for English does not appear to have developed from any particular encouragement which the people received in the past." Although the writer visited 373 schools in New Guinea, he cannot find any justification for the word frequently instead of on several occasions in this sentence: "(I)t is well known that the relative wealth of Europeans and their skills and ability in contrast to the indigenous population have frequently been attributed by the latter to a knowledge of English." Where Pidgin has been on rare occurrences "a despicable thing" Dr. Hall tellingly points to

the cause: "Nor does Pidgin have to be used as a caste language at all. Some Europeans think it is one, and some relatively sophisticated natives have taken over this attitude from Europeans; but it is basically unfounded."<sup>115</sup>

It is claimed by the Trusteeship Council's Mission that "Pidgin is not only not a suitable language for instruction, but that it has characteristics derived from the circumstances in which it was invented which reflect now out-moded concepts of relationship between indigenous inhabitants and immigrant groups." It seems that the last part of the sentence assumes that Neo-Melanesian promotes racial prejudice or perpetuates a master-servant status between natives and Europeans. "Linguistically," says Dr. Hall, "one cannot, with any scientific basis, claim intrinsic inferiority or superiority for any particular linguistic structure." "Socially, the use of Pidgin is, or can be, of advantage to all concerned. . . . (L)ook at its major function at present, as a lingua franca for Melanesians. It enables people of different languages to get along together. . . ." And he continues with an irrefutable finding:

In relations between Europeans and natives, too, the use of Pidgin is beneficial from the standpoint of linguistic equality between the two groups. The European, with but few exceptions (chiefly missionaries), is not likely to learn the native language of the region where he is; and if he does, without adequate training in linguistic analysis, he is virtually certain to do a poor job and not be able to talk the native language well at all. The Melanesian, on the other hand (at least under present conditions) is not going to learn English so successfully as he does Pidgin, and, by and large, he can expect to be at a disadvantage when talking English. In Pidgin, however, both sides can be on an equal basis from the point of view of command of the language.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Hall, p. 47.

<sup>116</sup>Hall, pp. 49-50.

Another exponent of this is Margaret Mead, an anthropologist who spent much time in New Guinea. Taking up the question as to whether Pidgin drives a wedge between natives and Europeans, she says:

Pidgin is the only language in this Territory in which both European and Native are on equal footing. In all other cases, with the European's imperfect grasp of English, the one or the other is necessarily always at a disadvantage. And it is generally the native.<sup>117</sup>

The research of C. H. Wedgwood in this area is all the more corroborative because it was independent of Dr. Mead's:

The ability to speak Pidgin was, and still is regarded as a useful accomplishment in that it enables a native to speak directly with a government officer and employer, and so he does away with that sense of insecurity which is felt by those who can only communicate through an interpreter. . . . For a native to be able to speak Pidgin was a sign that as a plantation worker . . . he had seen the world, and thus a knowledge of Pidgin conveyed a certain prestige. Even today one may see a child in an outlying village putting on airs because he can say a few sentences in Pidgin. . . .<sup>118</sup>

Actually, it is beside the point to ascribe the creation or perpetuation of social barriers to Pidgin. Were there any, they would consist essentially of objectionable attitudes, and attitudes as such have nothing to do with language as language. In fact, it is the attitude of mind that causes the "caste" barrier and that can be equally strong regardless of any specific language, be it English, French, German, or any other.

When one, moreover, considers how Christian Missionaries have for almost one hundred years employed Pidgin for imparting sublime religious truths to the natives, and in all their dealings with the Melanesians have had no "caste"

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<sup>117</sup> Quoted from her address of December, 1953, to the Scientific Society of Papua and New Guinea at Port Moresby.

<sup>118</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages, p. 106.

relationship, and when one observes thousands of natives talking Pidgin among themselves, when one sees even Europeans speaking Pidgin to each other because they happen to have different mother tongues, then there is no reason for insisting that Pidgin "reflects now outmoded concepts of relationship between indigenous inhabitants and immigrant groups."

What must be said to the other objection of the United Nations, namely, "the use of Melanesian Pidgin has unwittingly been an effective obstacle to the advancement of the people in the past . . . and could be a serious one in the future?" In support of that the Visting Mission to New Guinea cites the fact that no natives had as yet fully participated in the Legislative Council, in major clerical posts or in good Administration. Perhaps it has never occurred to the observers of that Mission that there could be many causes for that other than the use of Pidgin. After all, there are certain natives who are fluent in English (although instead of working in a Government office they may be working elsewhere, perhaps at the place where they received their schooling just in order to show their loyalty to their Alma Mater). Some natives may not be interested in getting away from their free bush-life; others may lack the intelligence; certainly all do lack the training for such posts and need experience at the job in order to learn it efficiently. And that's a matter of time rather than language, for business as such can be recorded and transacted equally well in any and every language when "all languages are of equal merit as languages." In the second place, there is comparative evidence at hand to show how the Territory of New Guinea has outstripped the British Solomon Islands precisely because "the government has frowned upon the use of Pidgin, and

refuses to allow it even at the primary level" in the Solomon Island schools.

Dr. Hall summarizes it this way:

But anyone who observes the educational situation in New Guinea and in the Solomons cannot fail to see that the New Guinea native is much farther along than is his brother in the British Solomon Islands. . . . The educational systems of both territories operate on a shoestring, so it is doubtful whether financial factors alone are basically responsible for the difference. The point is, rather, that the process of acculturation--of adaptation to the white man's culture--has gone much farther in New Guinea than in the British Solomon Islands; and this is due chiefly to the far more extensive use of Pidgin in New Guinea as a means of mass communication and of instruction both in and out of school. In other words, the British Solomon Island government's refusal to countenance writing or teaching in Pidgin has blocked educational progress, and in all probability will continue to do so as long as the British Solomon Islands deny the natives literacy in Pidgin and chase the mirage of 'simple English.'<sup>119</sup>

Failure by the people concerned to avail themselves of Pidgin, a ready-to-hand tool, spells illiteracy. "As Dr. Margaret Head has pointed out, the choice for them is literacy in Pidgin or no literacy at all. Without Pidgin, they will be needlessly denied what may be accepted as one of their 'fundamental human rights.' It thus becomes the responsibility, under the Trusteeship, to use this medium. . . ."<sup>120</sup> Deprivation of Pidgin means retardation in the acculturation process, for

A matter of special importance is the fact that Pidgin is the only practical present-day medium for conveying effectively to the native people . . . ideas and information necessary to them as part of their understanding of matters relating to their changing way of life due to Government and other non-native influence. . . . It therefore helps the Administration and other agencies to meet the obligations involved in

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<sup>119</sup> Hall, pp. 124-125.

<sup>120</sup> Dietz, Paper No. 1--Pidgin, p. 10.

Australia's Trusteeship, especially in connection with widening the mental horizon and improving the health and general way of life of the native people.<sup>121</sup>

The advantages specifically pin-pointed include the following:

As there is no other lingua-franca, all communication, written and spoken, between the various Administration Departments and the natives would come to a standstill. Practically nothing could be done by the Departments of District Services, Health and Agriculture, and very little by Education, for the period during which English was being learned--assuming the immediate and full-scale establishment of an extensive, Territory-wide and fully effective English-teaching organization. By then, chaos and disruption would be so extensive and deep-rooted that it would take years to overcome it. Trade, industry, and missionary teaching would likewise be completely dislocated--only to be slowly re-established as English became more widely used.<sup>122</sup>

Looking at the immense financial outlay to defray the expenses in implementing an all-English program and considering the dearth of qualified teachers of English as well as the lack of opportunity to practise at home whatever English is learned at school, C. H. Wedgwood is actually making an understatement when he says "to hope that any large majority of the New Guinea natives will achieve such mastery over English within the next hundred years, is to be over-sanguine."<sup>123</sup> No wonder Dietz considers the interim of years required for any noticeable effect of an exclusively English curriculum and paints this picture:

Meanwhile, we must not deny the native people opportunity of literacy, of improved living standards, of widening their understanding of the world and of their relations with other peoples, and of effecting such desirable improvements as a decrease in the high rate of infant mortality. All this could be started at once if the Administration were to give open and

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<sup>121</sup> Dietz, Paper No. 1--Pidgin, p. 13.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular in Education, p. 112.

official approval to the use of Pidgin for general educational and for specific teaching purposes. . . .<sup>124</sup>

From what has been said it seems that he who made the accusation that "the use of Melanesian Pidgin has been an obstacle to the advancement of the people" was somewhat uninformed.

Previously it was stated that Leon Pignon, a member of the Trusteeship Council, attacked the use of Pidgin as a medium of instruction because "it may do great harm to the native psychology."<sup>125</sup> Mr. Wedgwood has already been quoted as declaring how "Pidgin enables a native to speak directly with a government officer and employer, and so does away with that sense of insecurity which is felt by those who can only communicate through an interpreter."<sup>126</sup> In the general theory of educational psychology a principle stresses teaching from the known to the unknown. With regard to language, this means using a medium of instruction with which the learner is familiar. To act otherwise would be to jeopardise the learner's interest in both the new language and in the subjects he is expected to assimilate. Thinking of the pedagogical soundness of this, Dr. Hall exemplifies with this:

The current orthography of Pidgin is relatively phonemic. . . . English conventional spelling, on the other hand, is a veritable jungle, with innumerable pitfalls even for the native speaker of English, and its learning takes times. Our Pidgin-speaking native will, therefore, be literate much sooner than his English-speaking brother. . . . (I)t is very desirable for the learner's acquisition of literacy to be in a

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<sup>124</sup> Dietz, pp. 14-15.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. page 82 of this paper.

<sup>126</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 106.



phonemically sound orthography, since in this way he obtains a proper understanding of the true relation between language and writing.

.....  
 (W)ith an approximately accurate set of spelling habits in Pidgin, the Melanesian can transfer these and adapt them to his native language, so that literacy in the one can be an aid to literacy in the other as well; with English orthography, such a transfer would produce most confused and confusing results.<sup>127</sup>

Professor George Hoeltker, once associated with the Catholic Mission of Madang in New Guinea, wrote in a German Periodical in 1945: "Pidgin corresponds to the way of thinking of the Melanesian. Far from being harmful to his psychology, it reflects his linguistic and hence his mental structure."<sup>128</sup> Pidgin is easily learned by the natives and is, as a matter of fact, known to hundreds of thousands of children before they begin school. Thus, as a medium of instruction it would appear to be a boon, a psychological asset in bolstering the pupil's confidence in himself as a student. When a child enters school, he faces many new and strange experiences and companions. In addition to personal adjustments, he has to learn the basic skills that go with reading and writing; he has to interpret written symbols as words and ideas. When these words and ideas are frequently made use of in everyday life, he finds his language-learning easy; but when those words and ideas are foreign (especially from an entirely alien culture and from an unknown language), he sees hardly any link between a symbol and its meaning, subsequently fails to become a proficient reader and satisfied pupil. In 1951 a Committee on Experts on Vernacular Languages published this finding: "A lingua franca is not an adequate

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<sup>127</sup> Hall, p. 113.

<sup>128</sup> Quoted from Die neue Zeitschrift fuer Missionswissenschaft--1.44-63 (1945). Cited by Hall, p. 122.

substitute for the mother tongue unless the children are familiar with it before coming to school."<sup>129</sup> Since Pidgin is extensively known throughout the Territory of New Guinea and unifies more people than any local mother tongue, it is indeed an apt substitute for the mother tongues where groups of diverse language-groups are gathered--as in New Guinea schools. To learn the mechanics of reading and writing is difficult enough in a language already known; but to teach reading and writing in an unknown medium is to over-burden the potential scholar so that he may soon lose all impetus for gaining knowledge at school. As indicated before, for natives today (particularly because there are so few qualified teachers of English) not to become literate in Pidgin means staying illiterate. Of enormous effect is the self-esteem generated in the native who has become proficient in reading and writing Pidgin. It may be that till now the psychological worth of that has never been called to the attention of Mr. Pignon who suspected "great harm could come to the native" because of Neo-Melanesian--"great harm to his native psychology." Possibly Mr. Pignon was referring to a social aspect, according to which Pidgin creates a gulf between the Europeans and the natives of New Guinea. That has already been reviewed.<sup>130</sup> It may, however, be that Mr. Pignon had in mind the linguistic structure of Pidgin, since some have tried to condemn Pidgin saying that it had no grammar, that its vocabulary was inelegant, and that its lack of literature showed inadequacy in its power to describe abstract ideas. Dr. Hall notes,

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<sup>129</sup> Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p. 69.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. pages 91 to 93 of this paper.

first of all, in general, that the make-up of a language is indifferent with respect to the psychology of the language-speakers. He says

Features of linguistic structure have no relevance to the psychology of the speaker using them: a person can be introvert or extrovert, well-balanced or manic-depressive, self-assertive or servile, equally well in English, French, German, Turkish, Hottentot, or Pidgin. Will anyone maintain seriously that a speaker of Pidgin is harmed psychologically by using a suffix fela in mifela (meaning we). . . ?

.....  
(W)e find all the features that characterize pidgin languages generally: a small vocabulary. . . , a reduction in the grammar. . . .<sup>131</sup>

Since Dr. Hall is preeminently a linguist, the writer can quote his views in particular, especially since he devoted many years of research to Pidginized languages such as Neo-Melanesian. His answer to "No grammar," is this:

How can it be said that Pidgin has a grammar, when it has no tenses, cases, or numbers? Such objections can be valid only if one assumes that all languages have 'grammar' insofar as they conform to the structure of Latin. . . . A wider acquaintance with the structure of languages of different types teaches us that there is no one standard we can set up for 'grammar.'

.....  
In the traditional grammar they teach us in school, we learn about nouns, adjectives, verbs, and so forth.

.....  
Modern linguistic analysis approaches the matter from a new angle--that of finding what the actual function and use of words is, what combinations they occur in, and what classes words fall into according to their formal characteristics.

.....  
Looking at Pidgin . . . we immediately find that it does not consist . . . of words thrown together any old way, nor . . . of independent words with no grammatical inflection at all.<sup>132</sup>

Dr. Hall supplements these statements by adding:

Pidgin does not have many of our familiar categories of grammatical inflection--number, case, gender, tense. . . . Those particular categories

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<sup>131</sup>Hall, p. 106.

<sup>132</sup>Hall, p. 45; p. 62; p. 63.

are far from universal or essential. . . . Most of the languages of the world get along very well without any distinction between singular and plural. . . .

Thus, though Pidgin verbs do not show tense in their inflectional variation, it is still possible to indicate the time of action, if need be, by using adverbs like bifor (previously) for the past, finis (already) for action over and done with, or baimbai (soon) for the future. . . .

There is another level of variation which we call word-formation (which) in Pidgin is carried out primarily by means of compounding. There are virtually no prefixes and relatively few suffixes. . . . Of the compounds the most important types are those of noun plus noun, and adjective plus noun. (The latter differs) from a phrase consisting of an adjective followed by a noun, first with regard to stress . . . and then with regard to . . . a transferred or figurative meaning.<sup>133</sup>

According to the last sentence, an American negro would be called blakfela man, while a native Melanesian would be a blakman. There would be no point in adverting to the foregoing matter if people generally knew that a language can have grammar, even though that grammar might have a framework which is completely different from that of their language. It also emphasizes the fact that in order to teach effectively any foreign language, a teacher must be familiar not only with his own but also with the language of the learner. In that way he will not be hampered in foreseeing the possible pitfalls; he will know what elements he should underline simply because they are different from the learner's automatic and traditional usages. Since Pidgin has no relative clauses, no s to mark plurals or third person singulars of the present tense, no indirect object, no passive voice, no more than two main prepositions, one might be tempted to condemn Pidgin as unfit as a medium of instruction. On the other hand, it has certain features which are lacking in English. For

<sup>133</sup> Hall, pp. 72-73; p. 74; p. 75.

example, I go in English has a subject and verb; but other languages (as Russian or Hungarian) may have a subject, followed by a noun or adjective; in Pidgin there can be a subject plus either a verb or noun or adjective--each of which would be a complete sentence. Thus, mi meri means I am a woman; mi go means I go; mi hangri means I am hungry.

Dr. Hall writes: "Since language is basically a matter of oral communication, the first thing to be analyzed is always the system of sounds which the speakers of language use."<sup>134</sup> In his discussion Professor Hall refers to significant units of sound, phonemes, whereby the difference in a sound like b and p becomes significant; bit is contrasted with pit and through this the meaning is changed; he refers also to significant units of linguistic form, morphemes, whereby for instance talk and talked become meaningfully distinct. Since the suffix ed cannot occur alone, it is known as a bound form rather than a free form. In Pidgin there are free forms, no bound forms (so that while in English there is a change in I read and he reads through the addition of an s, there is no change in Pidgin for mi rid and em i rid). The key, therefore, to understanding the grammatical structure of Pidgin is the knowledge of the distinction between free and bound forms. Moreover, though the phonemic pattern of Pidgin is derived from that of English, nonetheless certain English sounds (like the th in thin and this or the s in rose) are wholly missing. It is a fact too that many Melanesian habits of speech are carried over to Pidgin so that natives make no distinction between p and b, t and d, k or g. The word rice can be lice, and dog can be rog or log. Nor do many Melanesians use

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<sup>134</sup>Hall, p. 52.

combinations found in consonant phonemes of English. Consequently, they may separate with an extra vowel such consonant clusters as the new Dictionary-Grammar of Neo-Melanesian lists: st, sp, sk, pr, br, fr, tr, dr, kr, gr, pl, bl, fl, kl, and gl.<sup>136</sup> Thus, glass becomes ga-las; play becomes pi-lai. There are others, including for instance akis for axe.

Another matter of prime importance is speech-stress, which is simpler in Pidgin than in English. The phonemic stress which distinguishes the verb contract from the noun contract is significant in English. In Pidgin the position of stress is fixed on each word on the first syllable, and hence is non-phonemic and need not be indicated. There is great deficiency in English orthography because there is no marking of the position of stress. As for the spelling of Pidgin, critics can no longer complain, replete as Mihalio's Dictionary-Grammar of Neo-Melanesian is with an almost wholly phonemic transcription of Pidgin--a factor which greatly commends the use of Pidgin as a medium of instruction, especially for the early grades. Its very simplicity ensures ease of learning.

Vocabulary of Neo-Melanesian provides ample opportunities for critics to cast their aspersions on Pidgin. Since there are only at the most 1,500 words in Pidgin--of which seventy-five per cent are of English origin--must there necessarily be a corresponding seventy-five per cent English purity in the pronunciation, spelling, or meaning in the Pidgin words? Or will any variation justify designating Pidgin "an adulterated, corrupted form of English?" And as a "corrupted form" will Pidgin impede the acquisition of standard

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<sup>136</sup>Francis Mihalio, Dictionary-Grammar of Neo-Melanesian (Techny, Illinois, 1957), p. xviii.

English? The etymology of English itself is very revealing in that word-roots go back to various parent-languages. In this way, as Dr. Hall points out, Pidgin is like English. Adverting to changes, he says that "if the cultural conditions change, the language can change along with them. Languages cannot be classified along any scale of fitness or unfitness for use; they are all equal in the eyes of science, and any inequalities which people may ascribe to them are the result of non-linguistic (social, intellectual) prejudices."<sup>136</sup> In Pidgin, meanings of some words have taken on extensions whose range goes far beyond the corresponding English cognate. When people find some of these words vile or offensive, they simply fail to realize that aesthetically considered those words are "a matter of individual preference, most interesting and attractive to some" and linguistically considered (especially in their changes and extensions of meaning) strike some as "fascinating and challenging, stimulating and ingeniously inventive." "The presence in Pidgin of some English words on which our society places a taboo," writes Dr. Hall, "has also earned it considerable condemnation." He contends that

Some terms which are taboo in standard English are quite harmless in Pidgin; many of these have undergone considerable extension of meaning. For instance, the Pidgin as (the English ass) now means not only bottom (of anything) but also reason, source, cause. Thus, it is not undignified to refer to as bilong maunten when speaking of the foot of a mountain; it is all right to say as bilong divai and mean the trunk of a tree. Nor is it the mark of a boor to say dispela man i as bilong trabel for this man is the cause of the trouble; lastly, there is nothing blasphemous in using the words God i as bilong olgera samting when one wishes to express the concept that God is the source of all things. . . . It is true, at times unpleasant connotations in English (such as piccaninny equating a negro baby) may disturb over-sensitive or amateur philologists who witness the frequent recurrence of pikinini in Pidgin.

<sup>136</sup> Hall, p. 45.

It does not carry the same meaning as its English cognate. In Pidgin it means seed or offspring of men and animals and plants as well. Thus, pikinini bilong diwai stands for fruit of the tree.<sup>137</sup>

One writer of the Sydney Morning Herald objected that Pidgin was "so crude that there are certain words . . . that you would not publish on the grounds of obscenity."<sup>138</sup> As uninformed, he may have had in mind a word like shit. In reality, natives never understand that word as excreta or feces; their word for that is pekpek or derti. For them shit is any refuse or leftover, so that ashes are respectably called shit bilong fair. As a derogatory term, Yu shit nating implies You low-down good-for-nothing. Therefore, to borrow the words of Dr. Hall,

It's silly to criticize Pidgin because it innocently uses some English taboo words in new and different senses--as silly as it would be to object to English moist because it was from Old French moiste (wet, slimy), which in its turn came from Latin mucoidus (covered with nasal discharge. . . .)<sup>139</sup>

When asked whether he thought Pidgin a stepping-stone or an obstacle in the mastery of English, Dr. Lusbetak pointed out that unless English cognates are given special attention the Melanesian will find many stumbling-blocks. He says

It is easy to see numberless similarities between English and Pidgin, especially in vocabulary. These similarities may tend to let the speaker of Pidgin imagine during his study of English that similarity of form implies similarity in phonology, meaning, and grammatical distribution. Nothing could be farther from the truth. A comparison of the vocabulary systems of Pidgin and English shows that a large per cent of Pidgin words have English cognates. But among them there are very few genuine cognates

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<sup>137</sup>The writer has summarized and adapted Hall's, pp. 43-50 and pp. 98-99.

<sup>138</sup>Hall, p. 43.

<sup>139</sup>Summarized and adapted from Hall, pp. 43-44.



or very few are words, similar not only in form but also in meaning. Thus, the New Guinean must constantly keep in mind that his Pidgin word for hand--in Pidgin, han--covers other areas of meaning: The Pidgin word han means not only hand, but also branch of a tree, tributary of a river, or foreleg of an animal. The fact that a native would qualify the word in context by saying han bilong river, or han bilong dog, will not change the deceptive nature of the cognate; han and hand don't always coincide in meaning; you may not use hand in English wherever you use han in Pidgin. If I say, han bilong pig, I am speaking good Pidgin; but if I say, a pig's hand, I am talking nonsense. Thus, similarity of words can be a stumbling-block if the area of meaning is different. There is an overlap of meaning, but it is only partial. The Pidgin word is more extensive, more generic, and therefore not identical in meaning. If it's not identical, then it is misleading to the learner of English whose head is full of Pidgin semantics. Similarity of form may furthermore produce the false impression that the pronunciation of the cognates is the same. Actually, Pidgin phonology varies according to the speech habits of the locality--and New Guinea has hundreds of languages. Lastly, Pidgin speakers may believe that cognates in English have the same grammatical distribution as in English. For example, they may think that because a cognate functions as a noun and a verb in Pidgin, supposedly it functions that way in English too. Hand can be a noun or verb in English; in Pidgin han is a noun only. In other words, the similarities may tend to confuse the actual meaning, phonology and grammatical distribution.<sup>140</sup>

Since Dr. Luszbetak was a Ford Foundation research fellow in ethnology and linguistics and therefore spent four years among the natives of New Guinea, he is in a position to appraise the worth of Pidgin in its relation to the mastery of English.<sup>141</sup> He says

Although Melanesian Pidgin will, for some time to come, remain a useful and even necessary means of communication, it seems to me that the proponents of Pidgin who claim that the language serves as a stepping-stone toward the mastery of English, are going too far.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Louis Luszbetak wrote this in a letter, dated October, 1958.

<sup>141</sup> Dr. Luszbetak holds a Doctorate degree in Ethnology, General Linguistics, and Comparative Religion and teaches at Techny, Illinois.

<sup>142</sup> Quoted from a letter, dated October 4, 1958 (Washington).

In other words, as a lingua franca, widely known by the pupils before they start school, Pidgin cannot be ignored. In fact, it shares all the advantages enumerated under the previous remarks pertaining to the use of the mother tongue in education except that its similarities may prove to be drawbacks unless they are carefully noted. As a given element, Pidgin must be compared with English at all stages of English-learning in order to know what difficulties should be avoided. Dr. Luzbetak continues

I would suggest you use a good number of examples, showing how Pidgin differs from English in meanings; how resemblances in word-form may, unless consciously adverted to, mislead the unsuspecting native in his pronunciation, including stress and intonation. Whereas similarity is deceptive and may cause inadmissible grammatical structures, constantly contrast Pidgin with English. In the learning of English there is no advantage to Pidgin and Pidgin, except that it happens to be a person's mother tongue and, as such, helps the teacher to pass from a known to the unknown.<sup>143</sup>

Father John O'Hanlon, M.S.C., headmaster and teacher at the Catholic Teacher-Training School of Vuvu, looking in retrospect at his ten years of experience, is in full agreement with the findings just recorded.<sup>144</sup> Very much the same is the opinion of Mr. Peter Meere of Fatima College at Bana, New Guinea:

English has been selected by the Administration as the common language to be established for all New Guinea peoples. This policy does not, of course, exclude the native vernaculars. As a result, the teaching of English takes priority in school. This is facilitated if the students receive a firm foundation of literacy in the vernacular before they commence with English. Acquisition of literacy in the vernacular is easier because half the process may be assumed to be known right from the start. Once a child has become literate in his own vernacular, he can be expected to transfer his ability in word recognition and differentiation to the

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<sup>143</sup>Information gotten through consultation with Luzbetak.

<sup>144</sup>Cited from correspondence with the writer in July, 1958. Father O'Hanlon's school is known to be among the best in New Guinea.

acquisition of English literacy. . . . A knowledge of Neo-Melanesian certainly helps the pupil to pick up English vocabulary more easily; but this is the easiest part of learning English. The difficult part of the subject, i.e., learning correct English sentence forms, will however be made much more difficult because the 'pidgin habit' forces correct English forms out of the pupils' minds.<sup>145</sup>

In contrast to the foregoing, the Very Reverend John Kolnik looks askance at the use of Pidgin. He reasons as follows:

I do not favor Pidgin because it is inadequate. That inadequacy stems from these sources: First, New Guinea peoples have a very primitive culture and this, in turn, influences their way of thinking, so that their languages reflect a great lack of abstract terms or thinking. Pidgin, built up to suit the logic and mentality of the native mind, is too concrete and graphic, too poor in abstract expressions, to serve as a mode of instruction.--Secondly, when abstract ideas are to be expressed, it can be done only through a series of circumlocutions. It is true that all thought-processes are by their very nature abstract in form, but that does not mean that their audible manifestation will be an abstract rather than a concrete and graphic term. New Guinea natives do indeed think and generalize, but that is done to a minimum extent in abstract language. Consequently, education (being a process of teaching one how to generalize, integrate, abstract, and draw conclusions) should be imparted in a way and manner which can teach the mind through actual practice to perform the aforesaid functions with greater facility and readiness. For this, Pidgin is wholly inadequate, exacting (as it does) little abstract terminology, even if it has ways of circumscribing abstract concepts. On the other hand, English which has numerous abstract terms as well as concrete ones has a marvelous adaptive power for lending itself to expressing ideas without a number of circumlocutions. Education is one of the best means of enhancing one's social status and raising the standard of one's culture. But education is best imparted through the medium of language. I believe that Pidgin is too limited for this and that the medium should be English, which is quite easily used to instruct the natives of New Guinea. English will gradually help them to think and to express themselves in abstract terms, thus bringing out the full potential of their reasoning faculty. That, after all, is the essence of all true learning and instruction.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>Quoted from a letter to the writer in September, 1958. Mr. Meere holds a Bachelor's Degree in Literature and in Education. He is a certified teacher and taught at Bani, New Guinea, for four years.

<sup>146</sup>This quotation comes from written consultations of Father Kolnik with the writer in September, 1958. John Kolnik got his M.Ed. from St. Louis

The Headmaster and teacher at the Dregerhafen Education Centre, Mr. J. C.

Reilly, holds this view:

The teacher and the student are both being hampered by the prevalent and widespread use of Pidgin, and (be it borne in mind) not good Pidgin but something that approximates a mixture of broken English and distorted Pidgin. Undoubtedly, Pidgin has its use among Patrol Officers, Magistrates, Medical Officers, priests and ministers, and traders. A European who already possesses knowledge of abstract terms such as truth, justice, honour, and wisdom, can acquire a surprising clarity, facility, and versatility in the use of Pidgin; but it is when we work the other way round and try to proceed from Pidgin to the vast possibilities of the English language, then the limitations of Pidgin which face the native are manifested in his lack of ability to clarify finer meanings and points of distinction. . . . I believe that the average native speaker of Pidgin unconsciously assumes a mental attitude that makes it well-nigh impossible for him to grasp the multitude, variety and complexity of ideas presented to him when he comes in contact with European civilization, customs and culture. The situation tends to generate psychological outcasts. . . . Teachers of lower primary classes use Pidgin to give directions and explanations. Where such explanations were simple, as they would be for such classes, the use of Pidgin would appear to be justified. I do believe, though, that it is a crutch whose use should be discontinued at the earliest possible moment.<sup>147</sup>

The writer feels that the two criticisms of Kolnik and Reilly would apply equally well to any of the native languages. If linguists are right in affirming the merits of all languages, so that no one of them is by its nature inferior to the other, then the "inadequacy" of the aforementioned critics seems to stem from a lack of cultural background rather than from languages as languages. And development of culture will come with education; and that education must proceed gradually, from the familiar to the less familiar, even

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University. At present he is teaching at Alexishafen, New Guinea, where he has been for nearly ten years.

<sup>147</sup>The writer has consulted J. C. Reilly particularly because Reilly had wide experience at the Government School of Dregerhafen, New Guinea. He has been in charge for seven and one-half years--first as principal, now as headmaster. His is one of the largest and best schools in the Territory of New Guinea.

if that education is imparted with a language whose vocabulary is relatively small and in need of enlargement. If a foreign language is used for the first years of the pupils' schooling, they will not understand and will miss the content-matter whereby their culture might have improved. And if their content-matter is not assimilated, their education is not advanced. Writing from Cornell University in October, 1958, Dr. Hall, when questioned on whether he regarded Neo-Melanesian a help or a hindrance in the mastery of English, replied

I'd give the answer that it can be either the one or the other, depending entirely on how the transition is managed. For it to be an effective stepping-stone, the teaching of English has to be done on the basis of an accurate analysis of its grammatical structure, presented point by point in comparison with the structure of Neo-Melanesian, analyzed equally accurately. On the other hand, if people try to teach English in a haphazard way, not knowing themselves what its structural characteristics are, nor what are the problems that face speakers of Neo-Melanesian on learning English, then of course the learners won't have any idea of what pitfalls they are facing, and are likely to make unwarranted carry-overs from Pidgin into English.<sup>148</sup>

In support of this, it is interesting to be able to read in Dietz's Paper No.

1--Pidgin: "The criticism has been made that Pidgin retards the learning of English; but investigation reveals that no-one with a sound experience of teaching English in New Guinea has made such remarks. In fact, the reverse has been observed."<sup>149</sup> Add to this the findings of Dr. Hall:

(W)hen one hears Melanesians speak English who have previously spoken Pidgin, one always meets Pidginisms in their usage. . . . Yet, if we look at this phenomenon in the light of foreign-language teaching as a whole, we see that its importance can be greatly exaggerated. This kind

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<sup>148</sup>A letter to the writer from Dr. Hall in October, 1958.

<sup>149</sup>Dietz, Paper No. 1--Pidgin, p. 9.

of mistake is inevitable in the early stages of learning a foreign language, and can easily be overcome with proper techniques of linguistic analysis and teaching. . . . We must be prepared to teach English as a foreign language. . . . (To learn a new language, we must understand the grammatical structure, not only of the language we are learning, but also of the one we are using as a point of departure.

.....  
With adequate materials based on a thorough analysis and comparison of Pidgin grammar with that of English, and with properly trained teachers, Pidgin could serve as an excellent point of departure for Melanesians to learn English.

.....  
As a matter of fact, Pidgin is much more likely to be a stumbling-block if we deny its existence and relevance, than if we recognize it and base our instruction on its relation and similarities to English, at the same time pointing out and warning against the difficulties caused by the differences.<sup>150</sup>

In the foregoing paragraphs the writer has given the various viewpoints found in the literature on the language problem of New Guinea. Some said that Pidgin is not a language; others defended it, by pointing out that even though it may not fit into a Latin pattern, it does have grammar, etc. Some felt that Pidgin provided a wedge, ensuring social discrimination between the natives and the Europeans; others showed how the facts are quite the contrary. Some held Pidgin opposed progress, while others saw its unifying force, its obvious value for teaching from the known to the unknown, its universal use by Government Officials as well as Missionaries, traders, and others (whether medical orderlies or teachers or technical instructors). Some clamored for the discontinuance of Pidgin; others challenged that as impossible of achievement, since language is part and parcel of a culture and, as experience shows, is not invented nor discarded by a mere fiat or regulation. Others suggested that the use of Pidgin was psychologically harmful. The objection was answered by

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<sup>150</sup>Hall, p. 115, 116, 117, 118.

showing how, on the contrary, the use of Pidgin was psychologically sound in school, where it meant passing from a known to an unknown; it meant literacy in Pidgin or (supposing a ban on Pidgin) no literacy at all--and with literacy it brought a feeling of accomplishment, self-esteem, and pride to the Pidgin-speaking native. Pidgin was, moreover, called a "bastard language," a language that had many "uncouth speakers" employing words that are taboo in "high society" or in refined English surroundings. This was linguistically unsound, and mere lack of understanding--it was pointed out by way of reply. Lastly, it was claimed that Pidgin interfered with ease in learning English, and thus barred students from availing themselves of English texts and general information. In answer it was said that such an accusation has never been substantiated; in fact, the opposite seems to be the experience of language experts. In other words, whereas Pidgin has not been proved inadequate (being widely used for both oral and written work), whereas it has not been discredited by the charges hurled against it, whereas it has in fact enjoyed the advantages of a mother tongue in the work of education, whereas it is easy to learn, it need not be considered a bad medium of instruction in the schools of New Guinea. It must be recalled that it allows the teacher to proceed from the known to the unknown; it enables him to relate his teaching to the immediate native background; it helps the student to understand and to keep him interested because it is easy and therefore will not prove a source of discouragement; it enables the teacher to teach content material and complete sentences from the start, so that he need never teach disjointed words or phrases but can always teach in context. The resulting logic is beneficial for the memory of the learner. The use of Pidgin helps to avoid teaching

beyond the ken of the student. And when the child is about to begin reading, it is easier for him to recognize the relation between sound and symbol if he knows the words (given in symbols on the blackboard) from his everyday usage. Since Pidgin is geared to the mentality of the native, it naturally will not have all the superfluous factors which a foreign language (such as English) would entail: Its words are fitting to the native's culture--in English that would hardly be the case, because the culture in which English is immersed is very different from that of the New Guinean. Since, however, English is prescribed by the Government, let it be learned as a second language--but only after the child has become literate in Pidgin. But since the speech muscles of a youngster are more easily trained than those of an older person, there is no reason why certain English sounds could not be introduced (perhaps in rhymes or songs) before the child is completely literate in his vernacular. It is important that the child hear and repeat certain sounds, especially if a case arises in which he tends to hear only those distinctions which he makes in his own language. Pidgin seems a fine medium of instruction when one looks to its sound-system: Its spelling is phonetic and phonemic. Accordingly it simplifies acquisition of literacy, for linguists (as recorded unlinguistic principles) agree that "the problem of developing word recognition skills is a relatively simple one in languages in which the words are highly phonetic and spelled regularly. It is far greater in languages which are more or less phonetic." Referring to the principle of "learning by doing" Mr. Dietz maintains that a person must first learn to think and write in his familiar language so that "English composition can follow only when he has learned to express himself. . . . To start off with English means that the pupil has to



try to do what is practically impossible--to express himself in a language that he knows little or nothing about. In any case, there are some things that can be expressed in Pidgin more easily than in English, since Pidgin is less foreign to native culture than is English."<sup>151</sup>

In the light for the foregoing, the Australian Minister for Territories, asked about the United Nations Trusteeship Council's desire to eliminate Pidgin, bristled up, saying

The suggested immediate abolition of Pidgin is just another indication of the unreality which often characterized Trusteeship Council resolutions. It would be just as foolish to suggest that all Europeans should speak nothing but Russian next week. Pidgin has been used by generations as the only common talk between people divided by scores of languages. We are working towards replacing it, but it takes much more than passing resolutions to change people's habits.<sup>152</sup>

With reference to the implications of such an order, Dr. Hall asks

Just how happy would the reader feel about being told 'You have to learn both nuclear physics and Russian; English is not a suitable language for teaching about nuclear physics, so you will have to receive all your instruction in Russian, even before you understand any Russian?' To insist on teaching all subjects in English, while the New Guinea natives do not yet know any English, is exactly parallel.

.....  
(The assumption is) that it could easily be replaced by standard English, by fiat and overnight.<sup>153</sup>

It seems mysterious that the Trusteeship Council in its proclamation of 1963 (in which Pidgin was condemned) rejected a previous conclusion which was formulated at a Unesco meeting of specialists in the field of vernacular education. In 1961 a Report of Meeting of Experts stated that when "a pidgin is used

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<sup>151</sup>Diets, Paper No. 1--Pidgin, p. 9.

<sup>152</sup>Hall, p. 13; pp. 101-102.

<sup>153</sup>Hall, p. 22; p. 103.

freely over a wide area as a lingua franca between peoples in habitual social contact, and the children become familiar with it from early age . . . it can be used as a medium of instruction."<sup>154</sup> Perhaps one should consider in deciding this matter that the 1961 group consisted of "non-technical delegates, whose knowledge of the problem was confined to a few weeks, spent in moving from one place to another." "Not one of them knew Pidgin."<sup>155</sup>

It seems significant to the writer that criticism of Pidgin as a language of instruction comes for the most part from those who do not live in New Guinea, nor are able to speak it. This fact was noticed by Mr. Dietz, for he writes

There is a vociferous body of feeling directed against Pidgin, but examination reveals that in every case those who condemn it the loudest, know least about it. Its opponents possess no more than a superficial knowledge of it, and are usually completely ignorant of it. They base their entire criticism on some Pidgin phrase only half heard, and less understood, which seems to them, by reason of its 70 per cent English vocabulary, to be degraded or garbled versions of that language.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Unesco, Use of Vernacular Languages, p. 54.

<sup>155</sup>Dietz, p. 5; p. 15.

<sup>156</sup>Dietz, Paper No. 1--Pidgin, p. 3.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESUME AND CONCLUSION

It has been seen that while it is ideal to have one mother tongue in a country, oftentimes it is impossible. Various countries confronted with such a situation have a modus vivendi whereby business transactions, as well as school curricula, are apparently efficient despite the lack of uniformity of language. Usually the people in such countries are bilingual, for they will study not only their own mother tongue but also a second language or an official language.

For solving the diversity of languages in New Guinea it was suggested that several of the many languages be adopted as media of instruction. The determination of those few would devolve about such factors as the size of the population speaking them and the simplicity of learning them. Unfortunately, in New Guinea no language has a large currency; besides, the amount of animosity that would spring up when one language would be selected at the neglect of another made such a choice of a few larger language-groups impractical. There were, of course, very few textbooks and reading material for any of them. But the chief reason against a selection of the kind is the fact that there was no need for it after Pidgin English had become a unifying element as a lingua franca.

Under duress, it seems, the Administering authority, Australia, introduced English. Various reasons were proposed for the move: First, it was said that through English as a common language the natives would be enabled to associate on an equal footing with the Europeans. In reality, it is true that there are better chances for the native to feel at home when both he and the European speak Pidgin, for then the native's self-consciousness and wrestling with a foreign language would not enter into any conversation. Secondly, English was deemed a better medium because it can adequately express abstract concepts without having to circumscribe (as is the case with Pidgin). Some said that Pidgin was inadequate and had to be replaced by a medium which could fit the natives better into the community of nations. However, here it must not be overlooked that Pidgin can express abstract concepts with ease though it may require more words, and the Pidgin has been used extensively and successfully in books and in the classroom. As for requiring English as a world language, one could ask whether English would be needed by every New Guinean, or whether it would be enough if only the few elite who deal with the outside world would master it. While admittedly English would be very useful in opening up a wide world of literature, the language is very difficult for the natives, particularly because it is not suited to their present culture or development. At the same time, to inaugurate an all-English program would demand many qualified teachers--and they are at a premium--and immense financial outlays. Neither of the two factors seems to be forthcoming at the present time. This means that despite the 1963 command of the Trusteeship Council to use English as the medium of instruction, it will take years to implement the order. As it is, immediate use of English as the medium of instruction is an arrangement that

takes little account of the educational principle that learning is to proceed from the known to the unknown. Underlying it, too, there is the assumption that English is as easily learned as Neo-Melanesian.

Neo-Melanesian, as a ready-to-hand tool, is recommended by many as a useful medium of instruction, at least in the early grades. It has unified many and various linguistic groups and has been "tolerated" by the Syllabus. Some have tried to proscribe it, but have failed. It seems impossible to discard it; it seems dangerous to attempt it, for it would paralyze the present campaign toward literacy and it would disrupt economic and social life, and damage and dislocate public health drives and native village-schools. It is useful in that it allows commencing at once programs of education, hygiene, and agriculture. Its merits lie in the fact that it is admirably well adapted to the native's mentality and is easily learned by both native and European. Being a language in its own right, it has been able to weather the attacks made against it. From a linguistic standpoint, it is psychologically sound to begin using it at school simply because it shares all the benefits of a mother tongue. If taught properly, it can serve as a stepping-stone to English.

The profiles that emerge from all canvassing of the literature are these: Neo-Melanesian is an apt medium of instruction in the lower grades, despite the condemnation which the 1953 Trusteeship Council made. Since it enjoys all the prerogatives of a mother tongue, it would be linguistically sound to use it as far up the ladder of education as possible. Of course, to use it for the lower grades would seem to be essential. But since English has been selected by the Administration (perhaps under pressure from purists and the Trusteeship Council), English could be brought in after the child has become literate in

Pidgin. At first, however, it would be taught only as a subject of the curriculum; it is only later, certainly not before the fourth year, that this English could become a medium of instruction in lieu of Pidgin.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Werner Joseph Shadeg has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Jan. 30, 1959  
Date

John M. Wozniak  
Signature of Adviser